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THE EFFECT OF TECHWOOD HOMES ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

A THESIS

Presented to

The Faculty of the Graduate Division

by

Howard Weaver Pollard

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THE EFFECT OF TECHWOOD HOMES ON URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

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SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis is to compile an historical account of the Techwood Homes Public Housing Project, America's first public housing and slum clearance program, and to identify and analyze its effects on urban development in the United States.

The development of Techwood Homes of Atlanta, Georgia successfully demonstrated for the first time the following important public housing principles:

1. The maintenance of slums is an economic and social liability greater than the costs of replacing them.
2. Government, both local and federal, must provide low rent public housing.
3. A subsidy is required in order to keep rents sufficiently low.
4. Slum clearance should be a parallel objective in the development of public housing.
5. The design of public housing must be of sufficiently high quality to achieve reasonable standards of health, safety, and privacy.
6. A local public housing authority is needed to administer local programs.

Techwood played a dominant role in the evolution of a national policy on housing. President Franklin D. Roosevelt followed its development closely and was instrumental in the elimination of attempts to block its creation. He dedicated Techwood in Atlanta on November 29, 1935. The President said, "Others will find similar opportunity in nearly all of

the older, overcrowded cities of the United States."

The basic concepts worked out in the Techwood experiment are incorporated in more recent national legislation including the U. S. Housing Acts of 1949 and 1965.

This study was accomplished through an analysis of source materials, files of the original application, news clippings, federal legislation, personal interviews, and field observations of the Techwood project.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Techwood Homes, built in Atlanta, Georgia in 1935, was the first federally aided public housing and slum clearance program in the United States. As such, it has influenced urban development in this country for three decades. Techwood Homes was a bold innovator which cleared the path for other cities to follow. Its soundest features and experiences have been firmly woven into our current national policies for urban development.

The development of Techwood Homes represented a dynamic new concept which took many years to gain national acceptance. Actually the process of slum clearance and building of public housing is still evolving and changing. When Techwood was begun, its detractors called it a social venture and its promoters were depicted as destroyers of the American way of life. Many said it would never be built. Clearly, an evolution of modern housing and slum clearance has occurred. Its critics now debate the how and why of the principles developed by the Techwood program. Congress has continued the basic principles. There have been refinements and adjustments. There have been experiments to find more effective redevelopment and housing techniques. In virtually every project, the original concepts of Techwood Homes have remained intact. In fact, they have been sustained and amplified by all subsequent programs in public housing and urban redevelopment in the United States.

Techwood was constructed and dedicated in 1935. It occupies a former nine-block slum. Techwood was promoted by a citizens' advisory committee under the tireless leadership of Charles F. Palmer. They developed the idea that a public subsidy was necessary to keep rents low enough for the former slum families. Today, Techwood is a beautiful, in fact striking, example of successful public homes.

Techwood's service to the people of Atlanta has been maintained. A new modern high rise apartment building and another major project now complement the original groups of two- and three-story structures. Techwood has been studied by many delegations of American and foreign citizens¹. Although Techwood Homes is an extraordinary example of public housing, it was not easily achieved.

Techwood, and its sponsor, Charles Palmer, were subjected to unending abuse from the very inception of the program. Its history has been stormy. Palmer described his personal encounters in Adventures of a Slum-fighter². He is still fighting the battles that began with Techwood.

Techwood was first conceived as a project to be built and managed by a limited dividend corporation. The rents would pay off the loans. This proved unsatisfactory and a federal grant from the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration was arranged to build the project for the Techwood Advisory Committee.

After suitable national legislation was passed in 1937, Techwood was transferred to the Atlanta Housing Authority. The Housing Act of 1937 was the keystone for all subsequent public housing and urban redevelopment programs.

Techwood hurdled every conceivable effort to block its creation.

The Atlanta Apartment House Owners Association fought it with an injunction suit. Secretary of the Interior, Ickes, delayed the program with his incessant concern for bureaucratic efficiency. The City Attorney of Atlanta delayed the project on two occasions. The U. S. Comptroller General ruled that the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation, which provided funds for the development of Techwood, was unconstitutional. This was all overcome. Techwood and more than 600,000 units of public housing have been constructed since these roadblocks were removed³.

At this time, federally aided public housing is a continuing and successful program with nearly 2,000 housing authorities throughout the entire nation. Slum clearance and urban redevelopment are major national goals administered by a cabinet level agency. Techwood was a beginning. Techwood Homes has had a profound effect on urban development in the United States.

This thesis is an historical analysis of the development of Techwood Homes and its subsequent influences on urban development in the United States. The history of Techwood is embedded in the great changes in American life which swept the country during and after the Great Depression of the 1930's.

This thesis would not have been possible without the extensive and carefully preserved collection of literature, manuscripts, notes, letters, legislative reports, and newspaper clippings which were compiled and organized in the personal library of Charles F. Palmer.

The writings of Palmer, Coleman Woodbury, and Helen Alfred are invaluable historical accounts of those eventful and fast changing years. Also, collections of governmental documents in the libraries of the Georgia

Institute of Technology were of great benefit in tracing the development and impact of Techwood Homes.

The material is arranged in chronological sequence dating from the Winter of 1932-1933 to the most recent Housing Act of 1965. Appendices are included as a part of this thesis to add vital details for researchers or historians who may wish to explore these events in depth. It is certain that the influence of Techwood Homes will continue to affect urban development for decades to come. It is intended that this thesis be an historical record. It is written to accomplish this objective.

It is apparent that the events recorded herein have led to a significant new era in the rebuilding of American cities. At no other time in this century has there been more interest or concern for the problems of slum clearance and rehousing of the entrenched poor of our cities. Techwood Homes made its impact during the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's. Only future historians will be able to document its final influence on urban life.

CHAPTER II

THE NEED FOR TECHWOOD HOMES

The Techwood Homes Public Housing Project was developed to replace a large slum neighborhood in central Atlanta. The slum occupied a strategic site between the central business district to the south and the Georgia School of Technology to the north. The slum covered a nine-block area and lay on both sides of Techwood Drive, from North Avenue to Simpson Avenue⁴. By 1933 the slum was considered a "blight on the City and the blight was not static."⁵ It was noticed that the slum conditions were moving "glacier-like toward high-priced business property, carrying depression of values along with it steadily and surely."⁶

Housing Conditions

The housing in Techwood was seriously substandard. Most of the houses consisted of two-story frame units, all of which were badly deteriorated. Before the thirties, these "gray, dilapidated shanties with back yards full of trash"⁷ were bisected by a creek which served as an open sewer⁸.

Two-story shacks gave double use of land by porches, one above another. Underneath them, children stared through trash between crumbling bricks that haphazardly supported wooden pillars ... youngsters ran out of sight between gaps in the foundations.

... In the rear were pools of stagnant water near an open privy serving several families.⁹

After the project was completed the U. S. Public Works Administration published its description of the Techwood slum:

It was a low lying, ugly collection of buildings and junk piles. Its houses were fantastic. Rotting boards hung precariously by single nails; sheets of tin covered up holes in the walls. Plumbing was out of doors.¹⁰

Another description of the Techwood slum was given by John Lear. He came to Atlanta to make an intensive investigation of the slum conditions for the Associated Press.

The business, financial and government center around which the city was built could be compared to an octopus, with tentacles spreading in all directions. Each tentacle was a small creek, draining downward and outward from the center through a winding valley.

In the course of events, the creeks became open sewers, outlets for the wastes of the central areas. The land along their banks deteriorated more and more as this condition continued until finally it became the least desirable residential district. By the time the sewer condition was improved, it was too late.

Slums were rising there. They grew toward, as well as away from the center of town until today they reach virtually to the steps of the State Capitol.

Along two of these valleys lay the districts which now include Techwood and University Homes. In each, there was the anomalous situation of a university devoted to enlightenment overlooking the most unenlightened hovels in the City.

Students of Georgia Tech could look out the college windows and be close enough to count most of the 197 miserable shacks huddled in the valley below them. That was all they could see on 24 acres of Negro and poor White habitation.¹¹

Living Conditions

The people living in the Techwood slum suffered from unsafe and unsanitary structures, overcrowded rooms, inadequate or non-existent plumbing, and poor ventilation. There were no safe play areas for the children, no sidewalks and no useful open spaces in the entire area.

The residents suffered from the parallel ills of poor health, very low income, and social decay.

The living environment was the most harsh of Atlanta's poor neighborhoods¹². The Atlanta police revealed that crime, including bootlegging and prostitution was a major problem in the neighborhood.

It was a notorious area. On the books of the police precinct, on the rolls of the fire department, in the dossiers of the social worker, in the files of the chamber of commerce, the district was docketed as Atlanta's Problem Area Number One. To the Health Department it was a source of potential epidemic. To the police it was an area in which officers walked in pairs, and which yielded arrests far out of proportion in their number for the size of the area. Periodically, the fire department, after heavy rains, would be called to send trucks and men to carry inhabitants out of the flooded shanties.¹³

The Lear report found further evidence of the effects of the Techwood slum.

Thirty-one criminals, charged with major offenses, were living there in one 20-day period chosen for a census in 1933.

Nine juvenile delinquents with police records lived there on one day picked by chance.

Twenty-one babies died there before they were a year old from 1931 to 1933.

Tuberculosis took a toll of 13 there in the same three years.

All this misery in the space of a few blocks.¹⁴

Effect on the Community

The nine-block Techwood slum had a deleterious effect on Atlanta. Techwood was a physical detraction, a center of crime and social decay, a barrier to development between two vital areas of the city, and a costly liability to the government and the people of Atlanta¹⁵. The slum had a blighting influence which was found to be spreading to other neighborhoods. It stood at the doorsteps of the Georgia Institute of Technology, detracting from its environment and blocking expansion to the south. The area had been a continuous problem to the school since it was founded¹⁶.

The Techwood slum repelled development of property associated with Atlanta's expanding central business area. A solution would economically benefit the growing city and relieve a blighting influence on the Georgia Institute of Technology.

The Techwood slum was noticed by many who passed along Techwood Drive, which connected the Northside and downtown Atlanta. However, during its fifty years of history, nothing was done about Techwood until the Spring of 1933.



Figure 1. The Techwood Slum, 1933

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUENCE OF TECHWOOD HOMES

The development of Techwood Homes came about as an effort to relieve Atlanta of one of its worst slum neighborhoods and to replace it with "decent, safe, and sanitary homes for two thousand people."¹⁷

Some sources have identified the original purpose of Techwood Homes as that of providing relief for unemployment and as a demonstration project to solve "this great need for urban low-rent housing."¹⁸ Actually, the emergence of Federal legislation, especially the National Industrial Recovery Act and its agency, the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration, provided the vehicle by which Techwood could be redeveloped as the first Federal slum clearance and public housing project in the United States.

The needs of the people of Techwood existed before the Federal programs were developed. A solution was sought in 1933. The idea to weld the problem of Techwood to the purposes of the New Deal Administration was developed and brought to bear by Charles F. Palmer of Atlanta.

Although Mr. Palmer originally undertook the Techwood project as "a completely sound business project,"¹⁹ he quickly expanded his concept to that of a continuing national program of housing and urban redevelopment for the entire United States. Techwood was the beginning²⁰.

Charles Palmer's Idea

Charles F. Palmer decided that something could be done about the

Techwood slum. Mr. Palmer, an Atlanta businessman whose chief interests lay in real estate, had become familiar with this slum neighborhood in his daily travels to the financial district of Atlanta. He noted: "I always move a little faster here, for ugliness was packed close on either side... ." ²¹ Mr. Palmer admitted: "It was no concern of mine." ²² However, he was struck by the overcrowded and dilapidated houses and the "ragged, dirty children, reeking outhouses--a human garbage dump--a slum." ²³

Charles Palmer's first interest in developing some kind of solution to the problem of Techwood was as a real estate venture. At the time, he admitted:

As head of a corporation with three office buildings on its hands, I had no direct connection with low-cost housing, and slum clearance was definitely outside of my interests. However, real estate was obviously involved. ²⁴

As a prominent realtor and businessman, Mr. Palmer realized that "the man who assembled the property for clearance and rebuilding could expect to earn reasonable commissions." ²⁵

An idea emerged in Charles Palmer's mind, one that would find its place in the pattern of redevelopment for America's cities. Techwood must be cleared, its ugly influence must be erased from the heart of Atlanta. The people of Techwood must be allowed, through the cooperation of business and government, to live in a new neighborhood with spacious and attractive homes. It could be done.

Mr. Palmer was intrigued by the legislation of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal Administration in 1933. He was interested in the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works which had reserved funds for slum clearance and low-rent housing. The legislation creating this agency,

the National Industrial Recovery Act, was one of the first Congressional acts passed under President Roosevelt's new administration in 1933²⁶.

The act provided for a system of loans which would be available to limited-dividend corporations for low-rent housing. It was significant, however, that the act left an avenue open for direct grants.

The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works emphasized the development of sound housing as a long-range goal and emergency employment as its immediate purpose in order to get its new program going in early 1933. This was emphatically true of Techwood.

Now cognizance has been forced upon the country at large and a policy of dealing with the situation is being evolved. In further study of urban housing conditions, we realize that while they have been aggravated, they have in no way been caused by the depression. The need for housing activity is deep rooted in our economic and social life. It concerns fundamentally the betterment of living conditions for the majority, and in its accomplishment provides a stimulus to business and industry. Housing is not an emergency measure in itself; it is the answer to a long term problem brought to a head by an emergency situation. It involves an increase in values by bettering conditions and stimulating morale. It is more than a definite complement to what we call the "American standard of living;" it is the creation of that standard in the sense in which it should be taken, i.e., a standard of decency in living conditions made available to the majority as a commodity not as a luxury.²⁷

Mr. Palmer engaged his attorney and others in a review of the National Industrial Recovery Act. He quickly concluded, "that old acquaintance, Techwood, the nine square blocks of squalor that lay along my route to and from business each day",²⁸ was the ideal area for the nation's first slum clearance and public housing project. He concluded that wiping out that slum, aside from its direct benefits, would have the effect of enhancing the values of properties in the central business area.

Mr. Palmer and his associates recognized that the intent of the National Industrial Recovery Act could be applied to the Techwood problem.

This seemed true both in the need for sound housing and for relief of acute unemployment in Atlanta.

They studied earlier legislation before attempting to approach the Housing Division of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works of the National Industrial Recovery Act, under whose auspices Techwood homes were ultimately developed. A logical sequence leading to public housing and slum clearance began with earlier legislation:

1. The U. S. Housing Corporation

During the First World War, the United States Housing Corporation was formed under the Department of Labor. This agency spent 175 million dollars on housing for workers in defense industries. These were the first federally sponsored housing projects. They were sold to individual buyers after 1918²⁹.

2. Reconstruction Finance Corporation

Public housing actually began in the United States under the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act of 1932. This act "authorized the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to make loans to provide housing for families of low income."³⁰ These were to be "self-liquidating Federal loans to private limited dividend corporation."³¹ Hoover's administration put its faith in private enterprise to do the job.

Mr. Hoover believed that industry would pull us out of the depression if the government provided the priming fluid in the form of Federal loan money and would steer clear of the accepted zone of private business.

Mr. Hoover's conference on Home Building and Home Ownership in 1932 had reported that low-cost housing for low-income families was not being obtained through traditional private enterprise. But how to rehouse them through private enterprise was not made clear.³²

The Reconstruction Finance Corporation made only two loans under the provisions of the Emergency Relief and Reconstruction Act.

Knickerbocker Village was built in New York and a project of rural homes was completed in Ford County, Kansas. Neither was comparable to the Techwood problem.

Two basic reasons have been cited for the limited success of this program³³. The lack of a sufficient inducement, "in the form of adequate return on an investment, to interest capital"³⁴ was one. The second was that the housing units were built beyond the financial means of the families for whom they were intended. President Hoover had "believed that the private builder who had always built for speculation and large profits" would be satisfied with a limited six per cent return because the public welfare was at stake. This was not the case and, as a result, no low rent housing was built.

Provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act

In May of 1933, Congress enacted the National Industrial Recovery Act for the basic purpose of stimulating employment during the depression period.

President Roosevelt established the Housing Division of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works under this Act, and the "work of developing housing was transferred"³⁵ from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to this new agency which was later referred to usually as the Public Works Administration or P.W.A.

The 1933 Act provided for the use of Federal funds to finance the "construction under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum clearance projects."³⁶ From the total fund of \$3,300,000,000, a sum

of \$123,000,000 was established for "loans and grants to public agencies meeting two statutory requirements--reasonable security and self-liquidating projects."³⁷ It became the role of the Public Works Administration to "seek out the eligible borrowers and dole out the funds."³⁸

With a broad sweep, the President and Congress cut red tape and sharply departed from traditional attitudes. Outright grants, as well as low-interest Federal loans were made available by the Act to states, municipalities, or other public bodies for the construction, repair or improvement of slum clearance and low-rent public housing projects.³⁹

Thus, a "few, simple words contained the kernel of the idea which bloomed into America's first housing program."⁴⁰

It was quickly observed that the need for creating employment, "rather than the need for adequate housing, per se,"⁴¹ was the basic reason for this housing construction.

With employment as the basic purpose of the Act, "long-term planning had sometimes to be sacrificed to meet the exigencies of extreme emergency."⁴²

The Housing Division of the Public Works Administration

A Housing Division was set up to administer the low-rent housing and slum clearance programs. The Division was created by executive order in July of 1933. Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, as Public Works Administrator, "was designated by President Roosevelt to develop the program."⁴³

The Housing Division maintained an executive staff with administrative and legal sections. There were six branches:

1. Initiation and Recommendations
2. Plans and Specifications
3. Land Requisition
4. Construction

5. Management

6. Information and Research

The loan program, as envisioned by the Public Works Administration, would fund up to 85 per cent of project cost and would be available at a 4 per cent interest rate.

This program presented difficulties for Techwood which were not quickly resolved. In 1933, only New York had provided appropriate state enabling legislation for local agencies to build and own housing⁴⁴. The State of Georgia was in no mood to pass similar legislation. Charles Palmer had visited Governor Eugene Talmadge's office only to be rebuffed even after a suitable Federal program had emerged⁴⁵. Therefore, a local form of private sponsorship would have to be worked out.

Developing Local Interest

Eventually, it was seen that promotion and group support would be needed. The promotion, financing, and rebuilding of one of Atlanta's worst slums required careful guidance. To "wreck its hundreds of hovels, and replace them with decent, safe, and sanitary homes for two thousand people"⁴⁶ was an extraordinary undertaking. Mr. Palmer knew that the long-range community benefits needed to be understood. He felt that a cross-section of leaders representing the "views of capital, labor, local government, the press, and the social service agencies"⁴⁷ must be organized in the late Spring of 1933.

The Techwood Board of Trustees

The first step in organizing a local agency to develop and administer Techwood Homes was the formation of an advisory committee. This group

was comprised of local leaders with varied backgrounds. The committee was formally organized into the Techwood Board of Trustees. They provided the impetus needed to get the project started. They were also instrumental in improving public relations for Techwood, both in Atlanta and Washington. They, along with Charles Palmer, must be credited with the final success of the Techwood Homes project.

Clark Howell, Sr. was the first to agree to accept a position on the Board. Other members included Dr. M. L. Brittain, President of Georgia Tech, Herbert Choate, President of the Chamber of Commerce, James L. Key, Mayor of Atlanta, and Herbert Porter, General Manager of the Georgian American, an Atlanta newspaper.

Clark Howell, Sr., Pulitzer Prize winner and publisher of the Atlanta Constitution, took an interest in Mr. Palmer's idea. He played a major role in the development of the Techwood project. As a prominent Democrat and close friend of President Roosevelt, Mr. Howell became an indispensable leader among those chosen by Mr. Palmer.

Dr. M. L. Brittain, President of Georgia Tech during the thirties, recalls the development of Techwood Homes and the Techwood Board of Trustees in his book, The Story of Georgia Tech, published in 1948:

As Georgia Tech's President, therefore, I was vitally interested and took an active part in the movement inaugurated by a group of leading citizens to clean up this area and use it for an object-lesson to demonstrate the value of the Public Works Administration through the Housing Division. The governmental effort in this state was greatly aided by the fact that it was able to make use of the superior knowledge and intelligence of Charles F. (Chuck) Palmer, who had studied the subject in Europe as well as America and had a nation-wide reputation as an authority on housing.⁴⁸

For a complete list of the members of the Techwood Board of Trustees, see Appendix A.

From early spring through the summer months of 1933, the Techwood Board of Trustees withstood the onslaught of local criticism. During this period they developed ideas which would forge the development of Techwood and hundreds of projects to follow.

Early Concepts of Techwood

Several basic concepts were devised by the Board of Trustees in the formative stages of the Techwood project which established a precedent for future slum clearance and public housing programs. It was concluded that:

1. Techwood Homes would replace a spreading blight in the community which had severe social and economic costs.
2. The costs of maintaining the Techwood slum were judged to be higher than the costs of replacing it.
3. Private enterprise could not adequately clear the area and build standard housing within the means of the tenants.
4. The community, with assistance from Federal programs, was obligated to do the job.
5. The private sector of the economy would benefit initially and in the long run.
6. A private corporation would finance, design, and administer the project. This was modified later.

Armed with their basic core of ideas, and with a background of new Federal legislation and an energetic group of supporters, the Techwood Board of Trustees set out to formally undertake the nation's first slum clearance and public housing program.

Mr. Palmer conferred with a local builder, Thorne Flagler, and an architect, Flip Burge. They became enthusiastic about the project. They drew the preliminary plans and cost estimates for Techwood Homes which would be used later in the federal application.

Local Opposition

The proposed Techwood development aroused a heavy attack from the owners of apartments and dwellings, both in and outside the slum area. This opposition began in 1933 and lasted throughout the entire development of Techwood Homes.

The Techwood properties were owned by large and small holders of land in the Atlanta housing market. The tenants were expected to pay rents promptly or be thrown out. The slum landlords later came to be vociferous and vehement in their objections to clearing Techwood. They were represented by the Atlanta Apartment House Owners Association. They crystalized their opposition and delayed the new homes for several months. Mr. Palmer had to contend with their vicious opposition for several years⁴⁹.

The Atlanta Apartment House Owners Association devised plans to block the project. They called a meeting of one hundred representative owners at the Ansley Hotel on Wednesday, October 18, 1933. They protested the fact that "government money was being used by Mr. Palmer and his associates to enter competition with private organizations."⁵⁰ Later the group set up a committee to employ legal counsel to carry the fight "to the last ditch."⁵¹ They were concerned that they had a 25 per cent vacancy rate and were confronted with six hundred new units. The group became desperate. They sought an injunction and succeeded in delaying the start of Techwood

Homes for several months in 1933 and 1934.

The Federal Application

The Techwood Application was prepared in 1933. It took nearly a year for all the details to be worked out. Financing was a main concern and timing was critical. The Board of Trustees felt that the final design and financing techniques could be settled later. The full text of the original application is given in Appendix A. The Board of Trustees applied for a charter for Techwood, Incorporated in the original application. The concept of a local corporation was later abandoned.

The Federal interest in Techwood Homes was to provide a stimulus to employment and to activate the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act for housing and slum clearance programs. Unemployment was acute and the Techwood project was estimated to offer substantial relief in Atlanta. The federal emphasis on creating needed work was used by the Techwood Board of Trustees when red tape slowed the application in Washington. In September, Clark Howell and three other board members notified the Secretary of Labor that unemployment was so acute in Atlanta that they felt it was imperative that Techwood be started at once⁵². This worked after many trips to Washington had failed to get the application approved. (See Appendix B.)

The Techwood Homes application was approved on October 15, 1933. The announcement was made by Robert T. Kohn, Head of the Housing Division of Public Works Administration. The Atlanta newspapers gave great emphasis to the fact that local employment would benefit from the construction activity. Between 1,800 and 2,000 Atlanta citizens were directly involved.

Government financing approved for Techwood amounted to \$2,875,000. Local financing for \$374,000 was arranged as "payment in kind," a non-cash contribution made by the City of Atlanta⁵³.

Techwood Homes, and its financing system developed under the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation, constituted a major breakthrough for urban redevelopment problems. As a result, over fifty-one similar projects in thirty-nine cities were built during the next three years from 1934 to 1937⁵⁴.

Fifty-one projects in thirty-six cities, providing for about 22,000 families were the result. Some 150 million dollars was allotted for the purpose, which represents 45 per cent of the entire (project) cost; the remaining 55 per cent of the development cost is to be amortized⁵⁵ over a period of sixty years, the rate of interest being 3 per cent.

The Design of Techwood

The architects selected by the Board of Trustees for Techwood Homes were Flippen D. Burge and Preston S. Stevens. Techwood and its designers were concerned with three fundamental considerations which dictated the type of new housing which would be constructed. These considerations were the health, safety, and comfort of the occupants of the new homes.

1. One important consideration was that the buildings would occupy only 25 per cent of the site area to insure adequate sunlight and fresh air for all homes and apartments.

2. Another basic consideration was the use of durable fireproof building materials for increased safety.

3. The privacy of the tenants and their reasonable comfort were also prime considerations in the physical arrangement of the apartments.

Techwood Homes in Atlanta set design standards for the early housing

division projects.

On twenty-five acres of land, twenty-three buildings containing 604 living units in apartments and group houses were erected. They covered one-fifth of the site and are of brick and concrete construction in a modified Georgian style of architecture. Living units consist of three, four and five room apartments and five and six room group houses, equipped with electric lights, electric cooking ranges, and mechanical refrigeration. The development includes social rooms and central laundries.⁵⁶

Techwood was considered a neighborhood unit. It revamped the old street pattern which helped to lower public cost by the street department, and also to reduce fire risks⁵⁷.

The basic considerations of the originators of Techwood have influenced all subsequent public housing efforts in the United States. Each of these design concepts has been worked into subsequent public housing legislation. Although some later projects tried in vain to economize on basic design considerations, most communities have tended to return to the original concepts of Techwood to insure the permanency and livability of public housing.

The designers of Techwood and the officials of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration decided that group houses and apartments would be more economical than single family houses. They concluded that it costs about "forty per cent less to heat a group house or apartment than it does to heat a single family house...and by grouping houses or apartments you save in plumbing and electrical cost."⁵⁸ It was decided that the savings in heat, water, and housekeeping were more important than a slight loss of privacy and that therefore group housing and apartments would be preferable. The designers realized that no small homes and not many large homes included separate dining rooms, and therefore these were

left out of most Techwood apartments. The Housing Division "considered this room as unnecessary and extravagant on the whole and therefore, cut it out to save money for tenants."⁵⁹

Important economies were realized in a neighborhood project which could purchase utilities in large amounts and thus reduce tenant cost. Techwood Homes therefore purchased steam heat for heating purposes from the City of Atlanta.

In buying current from the utility companies for 604 homes at one time, the Housing Division was able to get a much lower rate. The same idea of operating on a wholesale basis has produced economy in construction cost as well.⁶⁰

In Techwood Homes all of the bedrooms were constructed large enough to put in either two single beds or one double bed. Each apartment unit was provided cross ventilation and direct sunlight at some time during the day.

Adequate grass areas were provided for the children to play, safe from the dangers of public streets. Because of economical design, rents in Techwood varied from sixteen to thirty-one dollars per month. Although the Housing Division allowed some less expensive designs under certain circumstances, the standards set by Techwood Homes were adopted and applied for most projects built in the remainder of the 1930's and 1940's.

The New Policy of the Housing Division of the Public Works Administration

Approval of its application did not mean that Techwood could get underway. Local and national criticism began to ferment and Washington could not get moving. A secure means of financing and supervision of Techwood was needed.

Because the Federal officials of the Housing Division had been sub-

jected to substantial complaints from the housing industry, a formal policy change was enacted by the Housing Division in March, 1934, which led to the creation of the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation.

The Corporation was intended to be a fiscal agency and, as an arm of the Housing Division it would "expedite action."⁶¹

The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation was formed under the laws of Delaware and included among its officers the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary of Labor, the Director of Housing for Public Works Administration, the Undersecretary of Agriculture, and the Chief Counsel of the Public Works Administration.

The new policy meant that the Housing Division of P.W.A. was abandoning the limited dividend program which would have provided a loan for the proposed Techwood corporation. Now the Housing Division, through the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation, would concentrate on "the initiation, financing, and construction of projects under its own responsibility."⁶²

The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation was created so that all public housing projects would rent below the level of the private market⁶³. It also made slum clearance mandatory. The housing corporation provided cash for land purchase which helped lower costs. The corporation set an interest rate of 4 per cent. These savings helped to establish lower rents⁶⁴.

Private capital interests built up their resistance to the new housing corporation. They considered the original provisions for low rent housing as "unfair competition in the money market."⁶⁵

Actually the position of the private capitalists had a direct and ironic effect on the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation. Opposition by

private investors caused the Housing Division to adopt "the policy that all projects must clear slums and rent below the level at which private capital could function."⁶⁶

Thus, ironically enough, the capitalists forced the Federal Government directly into the housing business for the poorest people since the only way to get rents down--in a field where no profit could be made without exploitation--was for the government to do the entire job itself.⁶⁷

Helen Alfred, a writer on municipal housing, observed the change in policy:

The first six months of experience with the new policy of making loans to private enterprise for slum clearance and low-rent housing, caused a most unfortunate delay in the program. When it was decided that direct Federal action would be necessary, the Housing Division was revamped with this in mind. Although the new policy embraced the proper concept of slum clearance--by public authority, many obstacles stood in the path to achievement of such a program. Funds, specifically allotted for housing, were diverted, and flowed into other types of emergency projects. The original allotment earmarked for public housing, though raised to nearly \$250,000,000, subsequently was whittled down to less than \$120,000,000.⁶⁸

Techwood's formal application was revised to reflect the policy change. The application was directed to the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation which had just been established in November of 1933 to receive and expedite the anticipated projects for slum clearance and public housing. The transfer process from the limited dividend method to a direct subsidy was cumbersome. It was not finalized until March, 1934.

The change in policy meant that a system of outright grants of federal monies to local agencies would henceforth be used for slum clearance and the building of low rent housing. The powers to buy land and construct the dwellings were also defined by the new policy. This system has remained intact.

Techwood's financing was secured through the Federal Emergency

Housing Corporation. The actual construction and occupancy were delayed until other obstacles were overcome. The Techwood Board of Trustees now became the Techwood Housing Advisory Committee for the purpose of advising the federal officials on the project, which was to be carried out by the Federal government.

The philosophy of directly subsidizing public housing was put into action. By financing Techwood with a substantial grant, it would be possible to keep rents sufficiently low. Thus, decent housing would be available at rents the families could afford to pay. The limited dividend corporations has to repay the higher cost of loans from private investment corporations. Even with a limited 6 per cent return system, rents were set up at a rate to pay off a loan for limited profit making the costs too high to suit needs of the families.

National Interest in Techwood

Once a financing method was worked out, a substantial number of inquiries from other cities about the Techwood experience began to come in. It became Mr. Palmer's task to host visitors to Atlanta who wanted to study Techwood. Many communities were experiencing problems very similar to Atlanta's. They were eager to follow the events of Techwood. They came to Atlanta to benefit from the experience and innovations of Techwood Homes. Public officials besieged Atlanta and the Techwood promoters with visits, calls, and letters. At the time, Mr. Palmer considered being "first" as something of a disadvantage⁶⁹.

(The fact) that Atlanta was first, had its disadvantages. Not only were we the guinea pig for each step never before undertaken, but other cities besieged us for help. Inquiries came from Nashville, Chattanooga, New Orleans, Savannah, Lexington, Lynchburg, Grand Rapids,

Columbia, Montgomery, and Macon. Many sent delegations. We were glad to help, but it took time and energy.⁷⁰

Delegations of public housing supporters were sent to Atlanta. Nashville, Tennessee, as an example, sent an entourage of prominent "business leaders and planning engineers."⁷¹ They came to secure detailed information about Techwood. They conducted a complete study of the Techwood proposal. It was their intention to enlist the support of other businessmen across the country and also to secure similar financing for public housing in Nashville. Mr. Palmer gave them personal aid as he did other groups.

The McCarl Ruling

Things seemed to be going well for Techwood early in 1934. However, a major interruption occurred which nearly blocked the project. In February of that year, U. S. Comptroller General J. R. McCarl refused to release the funds allocated for the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation. Mr. McCarl declared that new corporation was created without constitutional authority. Secretary of the Interior Ickes sought out the President "to see if the situation could be circumvented by an executive order."⁷²

At the same time, Techwood Homes had been approved by the President's staff. However, Mr. McCarl's ruling prevented action from being taken under the provisions of the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation Act. Secretary Ickes was prevented from funding the project. The question was taken before the Attorney General. To await a legal judgment would have taken months. Congress settled the issue by giving Secretary Ickes full authority over the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation⁷³. A bill was passed in January, 1935, which made Secretary Ickes President of the

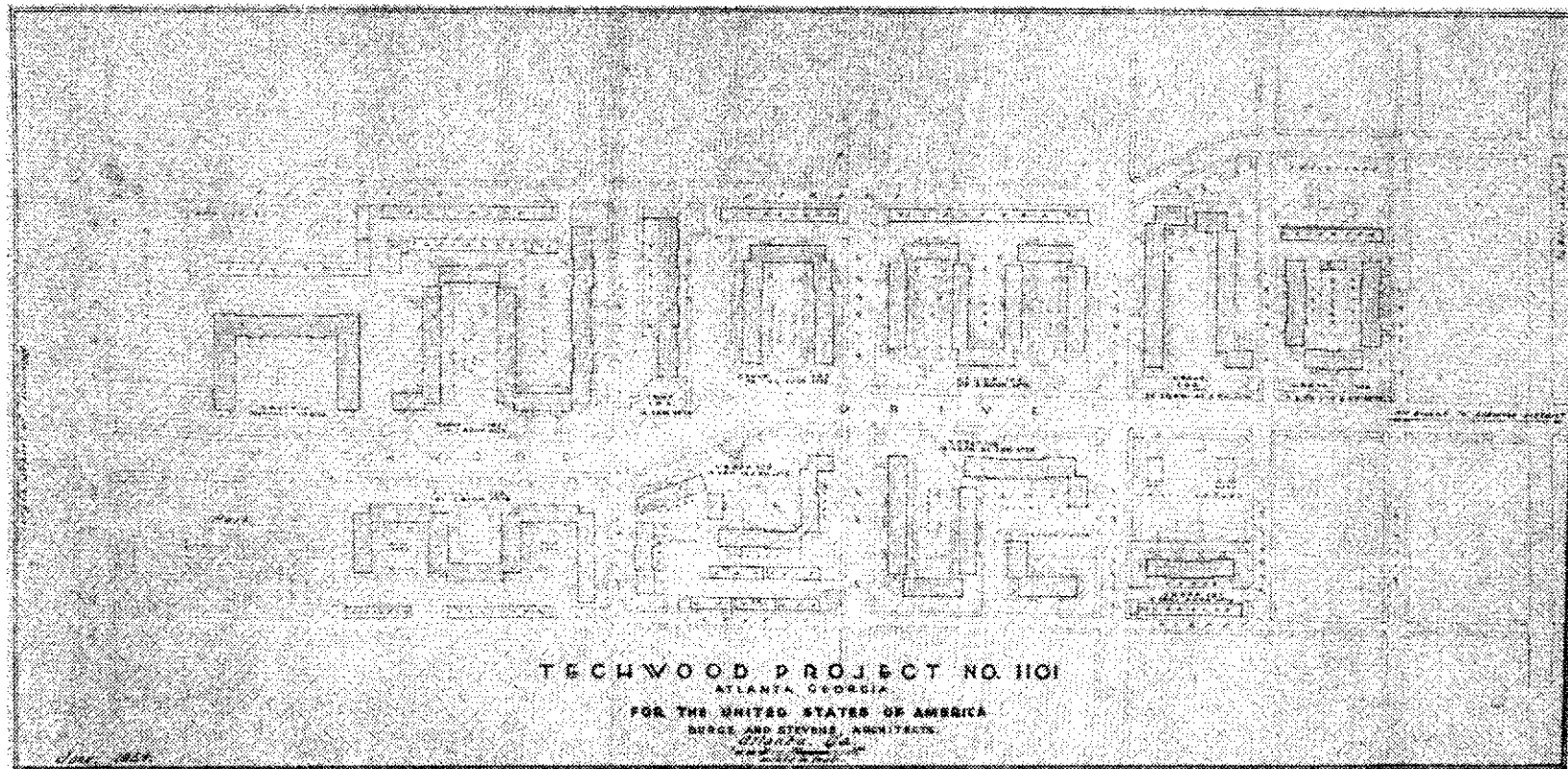


Figure 2. Site Plan by Burge and Stevens, 1933

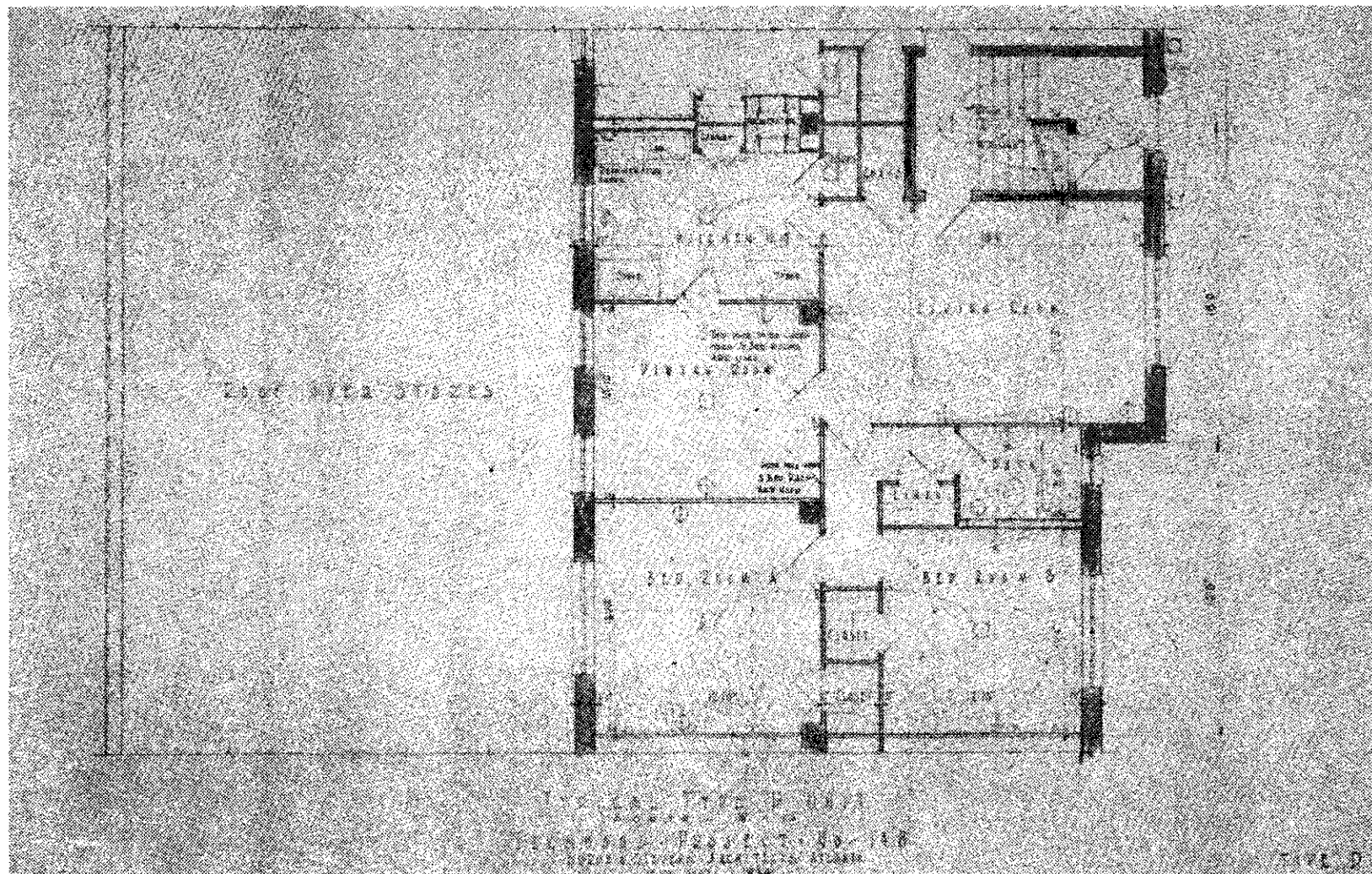


Figure 3. Typical Apartment Layout, 1933

Corporation vested with the power to fund the housing projects.

The first property in the Techwood project was bought on May 9, 1935. Condemnation proceedings began for the majority of parcels on May 19, 1935 with an order from District Judge Marvin E. Underwood⁷⁴.

During the summer of 1934, the Government bought many slum properties in the Techwood area.

Land Acquisition

The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation handled the land acquisition which proved to be one of the most difficult tasks. This was worked out at Techwood and was later described as the "most unpredictable element of urban housing."⁷⁵

The Housing Division's technique...was developed in the purchase of sites for the Techwood Homes...project in Atlanta. The Division recognized the absolute necessity of the right of eminent domain for the successful development of slum clearance projects. This right was specifically accorded to the Public Works Administration in the National Industrial Recovery Act. The Housing Division invoked it not so much to force sale by recalcitrant owners or to beat down asking prices as to expedite the clearance of title. It is almost universally true that the greatest percentage of defective property titles exists in the slum areas of a city. To acquire such areas with clear title would often take a year or more if the customary procedures were followed. The technique developed by the Public Works Administration consisted in securing options from the apparent owners by friendly agreement and then placing a blanket condemnation on the whole area. The consequence was that title was transferred to the Government and the long drawn out details of title clearance could be worked out subsequently. By operating in this manner the Housing Division could be assured of its slum clearance program and could proceed expeditiously. For more than a year it went ahead effectively. Two sites in Atlanta, one each in Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Montgomery were completely acquired and purchase of 22 others was well under way.⁷⁶

Early in the Spring of 1934, Mr. H. Tudor Morsell came to Atlanta to assemble the properties. He was the land purchasing officer of Federal Emergency Housing Corporation. He procured the 275 parcels involved, most

of which had been previously optioned by the Housing Division⁷⁷. Andrew Canell of Washington came to Atlanta to supervise construction of the project for the corporation.

The Influence of European Ideas

After more than a year of planning and negotiating for the development of Techwood, Mr. Palmer set out on a second study of public housing in Western Europe in July, 1934. He had previously been impressed by the experiments in public housing in Europe on a trip in 1930. He maintained correspondence with several officials. After Techwood's basic problems appeared to be resolved, he planned a closer look at European housing projects.

As a result of this trip, there were two basic ways in which European programs of slum clearance and public housing influenced Techwood Homes. The Italians added the concept of decanting which reduced the inconvenience to the tenants. However, the Italian experience demonstrated the failure to consider several of the basic needs of the renters as home dwellers, such as adequate interior finishes and number of rooms per family⁷⁸. Mr. Palmer felt that the programs of Great Britain set positive examples which Techwood could follow.

Italy

The Italians successfully developed one of the oldest major programs of housing and slum clearance. Naples had undertaken an ambitious program to renew the Rione della Carita district in 1884. It was never actually completed. However, by 1900 two substantial areas had been rebuilt. Several valuable lessons were learned. Too much money was spent on the

facades and too little inside⁷⁹. Another problem was density. Most projects in Italy had apartments as small as 200 square feet. Although the rules did not allow sub-tenants, there were usually plenty of boarders in most projects to help raise family income. The old Carita slum district of Naples had densities of a dozen persons per room. The new units often had three persons per room, too high for United States standards⁸⁰.

Mr. Palmer discovered the process of "decanting" being used widely in Italy⁸¹. This meant that in a multi-block slum only one block was cleared and rebuilt at a time. To start off, the families on the first block were moved to existing public housing.

The old block was wrecked and rebuilt. Then the tenants of block two shifted across the way to the rebuilt block one.... By using this progressive method, all of the slum dwellers were rehoused on the same site, and only 1 percent had to leave temporarily.⁸²

Mr. Palmer commented that the rehousing stage presented a very serious problem and "'decanting' gave us an example we could use back home."⁸³

Great Britain

It was the British work which brought forth the most useful ideas. Some of it influenced Techwood.

The British felt that good housing was a national economic investment. The Amulree Committee, a private housing study group, observed that:

Fit and proper housing is a national essential in the absence of which our existing social legislation must prove unfruitful.

Good housing means less expenditure, and prevention of disease, less crime, better benefit for education, less unemployability as opposed to unemployment. The elimination of bad conditions has a cash value as well as a moral value to the nation.⁸⁴

The British passed a law against overcrowding and then set out to construct a sufficient number of dwellings to accommodate the families who would need new homes. They used subsidies to pay the difference between family incomes and the cost of new housing. They called it "differential renting."⁸⁵ The systems of weekly rental collections to "keep down arrearages"⁸⁶ and incentive awards for cleanliness were beneficial to the housing management system.

Basic Influences

Charles Palmer had been heavily influenced by what he saw in Europe. He did not want Techwood Homes to become another marble facade which concentrated on the exterior appearance, as did the projects in Italy. Mr. Palmer and his supporters recognized the need for comfortable and beautiful surroundings both inside and outside the new homes. They recognized that a minimum effort in design would be false economy.

Techwood Homes was most directly influenced by three European experiences:

1. Substantial attention must be given to adequate interiors in terms of space and privacy. A disproportionate amount of money should not be spent on ornate exteriors, as was done with Italy's Rione della Carita.

2. Support for the construction of the project as an economic investment was demonstrated by the British experience.

3. The "partnership" concept of government aid with private interests was successfully used in Great Britain.

These ideas were found to be useful in the promotion of Techwood Homes in the United States. Mr. Palmer presented a review of his ideas in a

brief motion picture which was effective in turning back the tide of opposition to a national housing program.

City Attorney's Ruling

In the late summer of 1934 the City Attorney of Atlanta delayed progress on Techwood when he issued a ruling which stated that:

Land owned by the United States of America is no longer within the State or City for any purpose except for the service of criminal process. Under this advice, I think that the people who reside on this reservation would not be subjects to City regulations including police, fire, health, education, etc., or city taxation or otherwise.⁸⁷

If the City Attorney's ruling were interpreted literally, no municipal services could be provided inside the project area. There would be no protection for the life and health of the citizens living in that part of the City. The Attorney General of the United States overruled the Attorney of the City of Atlanta by reversing his ruling. The U. S. Attorney General ruled that "civil jurisdiction remains with the City and State and that tenants retain their franchise privileges and were entitled to fire and police protection, as well as the use of the schools."⁸⁸ Techwood was, once again, underway. The Federal Emergency Housing Corporation awarded the construction contracts to the J. A. Jones Construction Company for \$2,875,000.

Secretary Ickes' Visit to Atlanta

On September 29, 1934, Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, came to Atlanta for a ceremony which began the actual construction of Techwood Homes. Charles Palmer had experienced incessant delay on the part of Mr. Ickes for over a year. Mr. Ickes had a way of always bringing up one more last minute detail which would hold up the program. It was a

relief to the Techwood supporters to have Mr. Ickes personally dynamite the first shack to be removed in the deserted slum.

With a seemingly endless series of setbacks and delays behind them, construction on Techwood was started. Techwood was built in a period of slightly over a year. (See Appendices D and E.)

The Roosevelt Dedication of Techwood

Techwood was completed in early autumn of 1935. President Roosevelt came to Atlanta and dedicated Techwood on November 29, 1935. He had been an ardent supporter of the Techwood Project. He was determined to secure legislation which would produce a national housing program. He focused national attention on the experiment in Atlanta.

...the President viewed his first slum-clearance project. His face was grave for an instant, then broke into one of the happiest smiles I ever saw on his forceful, happy face.⁸⁹

President Roosevelt spoke briefly on national and world affairs then turned his attention to housing and to Techwood:

Within sight of us today, (he said of Techwood) stands a tribute to useful work under government supervision--the first slum-clearance and low-rent housing project. Here, at the request of the citizens of Atlanta, we have cleaned out nine square blocks of antiquated, squalid dwellings, for years a detriment to the community. Today those hopeless old houses are gone, and in their places we see the bright, cheerful buildings of the Techwood Housing Project. Within a very short time, people who never before could get a decent roof over their heads will live here in reasonable comfort amid healthful, worth-while surroundings. ...others will find similar homes in Atlanta's second slum clearance, the University Homes Project, and still others will find similar opportunity in nearly all of the older, overcrowded cities of the United States.⁹⁰

Mr. McCarl's Second Ruling

In January, 1936, the Comptroller General of the United States, J. R. McCarl, issued another ruling singling out Techwood. Mr. McCarl

ruled that rents at Techwood must be high enough to pay back to the government the entire cost of land and buildings plus all operating expenses⁹¹. Mr. McCarl further stated that "Techwood was United States property and that no part of the rentals could be diverted to reimburse the City of Atlanta in lieu of taxes for fire and police protection or for schools, sewage, sanitary and street maintenance facilities."⁹² The effect of Mr. McCarl's second ruling was to destroy the original agreements between the U. S. Department of Interior and the City of Atlanta to pay service charges for Techwood in lieu of taxes. A major result was to make mandatory such high rents that the residents for whom the project was intended could not afford to live there. The solution for this problem was the passage of a corrective bill. U. S. Senator George of Georgia introduced such a bill into the Senate in March of 1936. The Legislation in the House of Representatives was handled by Congressman Ramspeck. In May, 1936, President Roosevelt signed the law which "put Techwood and other similar projects back on the road as originally intended."⁹³ (See Appendix C.) Meanwhile, from January to May, the processing of applications for the rental of the new Techwood apartments was held up awaiting passage of the corrective legislation.

The Atlanta Housing Authority

Throughout the history of Techwood, the idea of an authority with local control and professional administration was repeatedly suggested. There had been considerable criticism of the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation. This finally led to the emergence of local housing authorities.

Helen Alfred summarized the central problem in her study of public housing:

The emergency program has been highly centralized, housing authorities placed in a sponsoring and advisory capacity. Initiation and authority are still denied them, the Administration taking the position that the authorities as yet are not sufficiently qualified to undertake full responsibility for projects within their jurisdiction. In cities without authorities local civic committees have been appointed by the Public Works Administrator to cooperate with the Housing Division. These advisory committees are of course without authority.⁹⁴

The Techwood experience helped prove the need for a better form of local administration. Techwood needed appropriate local participation and administration. This was accomplished by the 1937 Housing Act, after Techwood Homes was constructed⁹⁵. William Ebenstein, author of The Law of Public Housing, commented:

Though the Federal Government recognized the need for decentralization from the beginning, it realized also that if some universal standards were to be applied, control must be unified during the first period of a nationwide housing program. Nor should it be forgotten that in most states no local housing authorities existed at the time the Public Works Administration began its housing drive, and those which did exist were inexperienced.⁹⁶

The U. S. Housing Authority was created to bring about decentralization as well as unified financing, management, and construction methods. The responsibility for public housing was lodged with local housing authorities.

The creation of the Atlanta Housing Authority was not easily accomplished. The City Council and the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce had endorsed the 1937 Housing Act early that year. The Council passed a resolution on March 15, 1937 "urging passage of the Wagner Bill [the 1937 Housing Act], with a further resolution to establish a Housing Authority of five members."⁹⁷

Atlanta's Mayor William B. Hartsfield vetoed the resolution to create a local housing authority on September 24, 1937. He stated that "Atlanta is not going to be a guinea pig in this matter."⁹⁸ Atlanta and Techwood had long since been a very successful "guinea pig" in slum clearance and public housing.

Charles Palmer and the Chamber of Commerce set out to demonstrate the need for the establishment of a local housing authority. Mr. Palmer described a typical reaction:

The irony of the position in which Atlanta found herself in March, 1938 came full force to me through what Captain Reiss (the British public housing leader) said about Techwood: 'Best public housing in America.' The best and first as well. Surely my home town was better prepared than any other city to hold her leadership, now that public housing had been established as national policy.⁹⁹

Eventually, Mr. Palmer and the supporters of the housing movement won out and the Mayor appointed the members of the Atlanta Housing Authority. Mr. Palmer was made Chairman, and in a few years' time succeeded in bringing about a major slum clearance and low-rent housing program for Atlantans.

The experiences of Techwood Homes had led to a final solution: local public housing authorities. This was found to be the best answer and has remained as a keystone to the development of public housing in the United States.

Thus, local housing authorities, rather than a federal agency with a local advisory board, emerged as the accepted system for local public housing development.



Figure 4. Techwood Homes After Completion and Occupancy, 1937



Figure 5. An Aerial View of Techwood Homes After Completion and Occupancy, 1937

CHAPTER IV

LEGISLATION AFTER TECHWOOD

Techwood exerted its most profound and lasting influence on federal housing legislation. The experiences and innovations of Techwood Homes were imprinted in the first Housing Act of 1937. Its effect is seen in all subsequent housing legislation up to and including the Housing Act of 1965. Its influence will continue to be felt on housing and urban development in the United States.

Techwood was based on the need for decent housing by low-income families. It utilized the crisis of the early depression as a vehicle for fulfillment. It was based on economic reality. It sought to exemplify and to innovate in public housing. Even during its very construction, Techwood and its creators were building the case for a new national housing policy.

Charles Palmer had led the long fight for Techwood and all that it would eventually represent to the nation.

A National Housing Policy

Once Techwood's success was secured, Mr. Palmer exerted his leadership in another direction: the evolution of a national policy for slum clearance and public housing.

Mr. Palmer saw that a national subsidy and not merely emergency funds were required. He spoke to the New York Building Congress on March 1, 1935. At this time, he set the stage for national legislation on slum

clearance and public housing:

Proper housing for families of low income cannot be supplied on a self-liquidating basis, and Government subsidy appears to be the inevitable, feasible means of rebuilding slum areas. Housing for the poorest people in this country at State expense, or at least with state aid is inevitable because it is socially and economically sound. If some of the impoverished nations in Europe can do what they have done for their poor, I think we can certainly say when this country is awakened to its responsibility, we will initiate a housing program greater than any that has been attempted anywhere else. The day is fast approaching when States will compel cities to house their needy citizens properly just as cities are now required to educate all children. Experience has proved good housing can be financially profitable to the community no matter how heavily subsidized by it.¹⁰⁰

The Housing Act of 1937 was the fruition of that concept. Techwood Homes was its touchstone, its test for value.

Preparation for Action

A Housing Act was presented in 1936 but failed to pass. It seemed urgent that a similar act be passed during the next year. Mr. Palmer visited President Roosevelt at the White House in January, 1937, to make a formal plea for a new housing act. Mrs. Roosevelt arranged a dinner at which Mr. Palmer showed a film entitled "The World War Against the Slums," a revised version of his 1934 survey of European public housing. Mr. Palmer said at the time:

Not that the President was unaware of the need to clear slums. (I well knew of his deep interest in the matter.) But my feeling was that a viewing of the films might prompt the President to give housing top priority.¹⁰¹

Mr. Palmer's chief purpose was to insure that "slum clearance would become a continuing national policy instead of merely an emergency measure to make jobs."¹⁰²

Revision of the 1936 Act

In February of 1937, a group of officials from the National Asso-

ciation of Housing Officials met in Washington to revise the Housing Act which had failed to pass. Mr. Palmer was pleased with the first draft.

My optimism mounted on reading a preliminary draft. There was ample provision for both federal and local subsidies so that rents would be low enough for people from the slums to afford. The scheme was not unlike that used in England.¹⁰³

Mr. Palmer enlisted the aid of Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt. She helped clear the path to the President's office. The President and his staff were enlightened and pressed for passage of the 1937 proposal in Congress.

The U. S. Housing Act of 1937

The United States Housing Act of 1937 was recognized by the National Association of Housing Officials as an important advancement in low-rent housing.

Unquestionably, the act is one of the most important pieces of housing legislation enacted in this country. For the first time the Federal Government has outlined a long-term program and a continuing agency for the improvement of low-rent housing. Thus, at last it attains the national status granted years ago to middle-class housing, home ownership, etc.¹⁰⁴

The bill was sponsored by Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York and Representative Henry Steagall of Alabama.

The basic objective of the 1937 Wagner-Steagall Bill was to provide federal aid to local and state housing authorities for the provision of decent housing for low-income families. This included those "who are in the lowest income group and who cannot afford to pay enough to cause private enterprise in their locality or metropolitan area to build an adequate supply of decent, safe, and sanitary dwellings for their use."¹⁰⁵

The Act created the United States Housing Authority in the Department of the Interior to carry out the stated objectives. The powers of

the authority were exercised by an administrator appointed by the President with the consent of the Senate. Some \$26,000,000 was authorized for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1938. The authority was given the power to issue up to \$500,000,000 in obligation bonds. It provided that no more than 10 per cent of the Authority's funds could be spent in any one state.

The Act made provisions for capital grants, loans, annual contributions, transfer of existing projects, and assurances for the "low-rent character of projects."¹⁰⁶

One of the most essential sections was the slum clearance provision. This states that an equal number of substandard units must be eliminated. The details of this and other provisions are cited in Appendix F.

Techwood had been the innovator for the essential provisions of the new housing act. Three needs clearly evolved:

1. There must be a direct capital grant to keep rents low enough to serve the families in need of such housing. Subsidies would be mandatory.

2. There needs to be a local housing authority with appropriate powers to set up and to administer the housing program.

3. Slum clearance must be a part of the overall program.

These features were incorporated into the 1937 Act and have been subsequently refined and expanded.

World War II Housing Programs

The new national policy on slum clearance and public housing was interrupted by the Second World War. However, the energies and resources of the program were applied to provide housing for the nation's defense

needs. Charles Palmer was appointed by President Roosevelt to serve as Housing Coordinator of the National Defense Advisory Commission.

Post War Legislation

Meanwhile, Mrs. Roosevelt maintained her close interest in the housing program. In 1942, after a meeting with Mr. Palmer, she reflected the mood for post-war legislation:

Of course, there is practically no rebuilding going on at present. The thing which he (Palmer) brought out, however, and which interested all of us is the amount of planning which has been done for developments in all these areas.

Improved housing can be undertaken as soon as the war ends and the normal transportation is resumed. This will be a source of employment which is basically very valuable, because the building materials used require much labor in addition to the labor required in the building of houses.

Of course, we have no devastated areas, but we shall need much additional housing. I hope we shall study the plans made in Great Britain and use some of their ideas which can be adapted to our own needs. I hope we shall offer the occupied countries encouragement by making it clear that we hope to help them along the same lines.¹⁰⁷

Mrs. Roosevelt was helpful in continuing the original concepts developed by Techwood and the 1937 Housing Act. Her statements and activities were helpful in the development of more advanced legislation. Charles Palmer expressed his gratitude for her interest and work on the housing program on several occasions in his writings and personal interviews.

The Housing and Home Finance Agency

In July, 1947, the next major housing reorganization was accomplished. The 1947 Act established the Housing and Home Finance Agency which succeeded the U. S. Housing Authority¹⁰⁸. The path was cleared for the provision of slum clearance as a major national policy.

The Housing Act of 1949

After considerable discussion and study over the years, Congress passed the Housing Act of 1949, establishing slum clearance as a national policy. This Act was linked directly to the 1937 Act and to the Techwood experience. Mr. Palmer had consistently urged slum clearance as the co-partner of public housing programs. Urban renewal was the result.

The 1949 Housing Act provided three new types of improvements in federal assistance for slum clearance and urban development.

1. Title I "pioneers a new attack on the nation's slum and blighted areas."¹⁰⁹ It created a program of loans and grants in which slum areas could be acquired publicly, cleared or rehabilitated and returned to the private economy. Two-thirds to three-fourths of the cost deficit would be eligible for a federal grant.

2. Title II extended the public low-rent housing program.

3. Title IV provided a new element, housing research.¹¹⁰

The Housing Act of 1965

Urban redevelopment and low-rent housing programs were established at a major level in 1965. A new cabinet level Department of Housing and Urban Development, was created to redevelop the cities and provide livable homes for their inhabitants.

Rent supplements, discussed earlier by Mr. Palmer and others in the 1930's, were included in the 1965 Act. The use of non-profit and limited dividend corporations to build and administer low-rent housing programs was expanded in the 1965 Act. Some 240,000 additional units of public housing were authorized.

The 1965 Housing Act climaxed the thirty-year history of public housing and urban development through federal assistance. Techwood was its keystone. It was a bold innovator. Techwood Homes ran the full gamut of public housing experience before the way was cleared for a national program. Today, Techwood is a notable example of a successful project of decent, safe, and sanitary housing for several hundred families. It continues to provide living evidence of a practical solution to the housing and slum problems of our cities. (See Appendix A.)

CHAPTER V

TECHWOOD TODAY

Techwood Homes has become a reality. It has accomplished its goals. This could be seen after 1939 when Techwood was 100 per cent occupied by families whose average income was only \$21.00 a week¹¹¹.

A complete transition has been made in the neighborhood.

Instead of a tangle of ramshackle shacks amid narrow, twisting alleys, there was an orderly rectangle of trim brick homes on broad, straight streets. Where there had been no sanitation, there now was a bathroom for every family. Unhealthy overcrowding was replaced by life in ample space; only 25 per cent of the area was occupied by the buildings.

What had been a wilderness of weeds or no vegetation at all became a garden. Mimosa, white and pink crepe myrtle, Chinese and American elms, and dogwood trees bloomed. Roses and other flowers took root..... And under them acres of new green grass.

A kindergarten was organized. Adult education groups studied subjects like co-operatives, social medicine, civil law and government, and book reviews. An athletic association sponsored a sports program. A woodworking shop was set up to give vocational training to children over six.

It is now only two years since Techwood was occupied, but the results are already clear.

There has not been a single case of juvenile delinquency from the area.

There have been no infant deaths, although the birth rate is at least five a month.

There have been no cases of tuberculosis; two suspected cases were tested and found negative.

Burglaries, larcencies, and assaults have been reduced to virtual zero in contrast to the surrounding area, which, still largely slum, has as heavy a concentration of crime as ever.¹¹²

Techwood Homes has remained an extraordinary example of excellent public housing design in the United States. This project has provided a demonstration that public housing can be esthetically pleasing and accommodating to its renters as well as to the community. Although Techwood Homes is the oldest federally-aided public housing project in the United States, it has not deteriorated with age. In fact, Techwood Homes has matured and improved as an integral part of central Atlanta. Techwood Homes is now a large, beautiful neighborhood which enjoys a park-like setting of green trees and neat lawns¹¹³. It is admired by local citizens and visitors alike. Its residents often commend the amenities of their neighborhood¹¹⁴.

Techwood Homes is a living monument to the system of public housing and urban redevelopment practiced in the United States. It was first. It cleared the problem-strewn path for our basic system. Its supporters helped to initiate and later to refine the structure of federal housing legislation.

Techwood was founded to serve a humanitarian need. It utilized the social pressures of the early thirties as a temporary base to get off the ground. Mr. Palmer was its tireless leader who came to take up the cause for low-rent public housing and slum clearance as a parallel advantage. He insisted on quality in the buildings and their environment. He persisted until he proved the need for, and won, a subsidy system to keep rents sufficiently low. He molded the best European experiences into Techwood. He also steered wisely from their excesses. He succeeded, after many heartbreaking delays and rebuttals, in selling his concept to President Roosevelt. He won a place in national policy for sound housing

and for urban redevelopment.

Charles Palmer has stressed time and time again that Techwood Homes could not have been achieved except for the dedication and courage of many people. He is indebted to President Roosevelt and the First Lady for their contributions to the movement. He remembers the work of Clark Howell, Sr., Dr. John Hope, Flip Burge, Mayor John S. Cohen, Thorne Flagler, Preston Stevens, Dr. Luther Brittain, and many others who worked with him through the difficult times. He will not let it be forgotten that countless others were significant in creating Techwood and the housing and slum clearance programs which followed¹¹⁵.

Techwood is still available to the students and practitioners of urban development as a laboratory of successful public housing. Its homes and grounds may be inspected. They stand up well. Its occupants will talk about their homes--how pleased they are--how their lives are benefited by these low-rent modern apartments. However, hardly anyone remembers what used to be there or who helped make it all possible¹¹⁶.

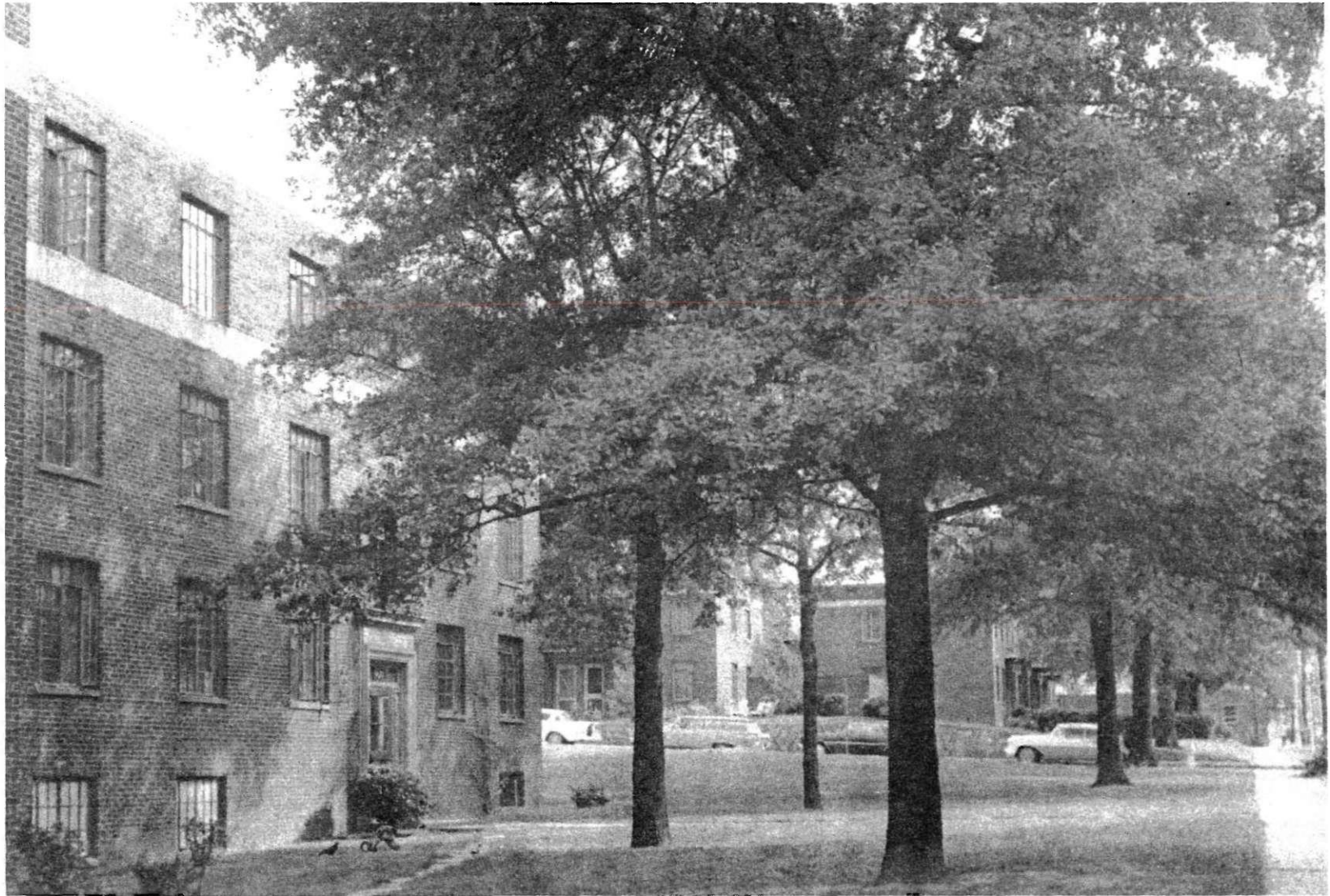


Figure 6. Techwood Today, 1968

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

TEXT OF THE ORIGINAL TECHWOOD, INC. APPLICATION

October 5, 1933

Division of Housing
Public Works,
Washington, D. C.

Attention: N. Max Bunning, Esquire, Assistant Director

Gentlemen:

We hereby apply for a loan of \$2,375,000 on a project totaling \$2,750,000 for Techwood, Incorporated.

OUTLINE OF PROJECT

Techwood, Incorporated, now completing its organization, a corporation without capital stock, not for gain, governed by a board of fifteen trustees without pay among whom are the Mayor of the City, the President of Georgia Institute of Technology, the heads of the three great newspapers, the President of the Chamber of Commerce, a representative of labor, three professional men and a representative of the tenants in the project, a representative of Emory University, and others.

It will clean out eight blocks of the worse slum area in the city immediately between the financial section and Georgia Tech replacing the shacks of four hundred negro families by fire-proof apartments for five hundred fifty-seven white families and one hundred sixty students, giving work to seven hundred eighty-five men for a year directly in the project itself, and employing hundreds of others in the preparation of materials.

The four hundred negro families will be placed in a modern slum clearance project for colored people adjoining Atlanta and Spellman Universities which are outstanding institutions of higher learning for colored people.

That the project is needed and will be rapidly absorbed is shown by the attached letter from the Building Owners and Managers Association marked Exhibit "E", showing that between May 1st and September 28th local vacancies decreased from 33% to between 25% and 27% and inquiries increased over 10% and that the greatest demand was for apartments from \$35 to \$50. All apartments in this project will rent for \$35 per month or less. It will be noted that the decrease in vacancies themselves was approximately 20% and that this project will increase supply less than 6%.

Attached marked Exhibit "F" is statement from the Industrial Bureau of the Chamber of Commerce showing that expansion in residence occupancy started very substantially in July. For more than a year before that time there were net losses of large proportions in the use of electric meters, gas meters, and telephones. These all changed to substantial gains in July and August. Attached marked Exhibit "C" is a statement also from the Industrial Bureau showing the great number of obsolete houses which have been torn down recently in Atlanta or that need to be replaced.

The projects total cost is \$2,750,000 of which \$ 2,375,000 will be furnished by the Government and \$375,000 furnished by the citizens of Atlanta. The City itself will lease the two parks created from public spirited citizens who will buy them for this purpose. The project is sound in every respect, financially, sociologically, from the standpoint of city development, and to raise the standard of living. Last but not least it

puts large numbers of men at work before winter sets in.

It has the entire backing of the community and merits especially expeditious treatment to start employment in Atlanta, because of the ruling by the Federal Government that Georgia and Atlanta cannot borrow because of Constitutional limitations. This leaves these limited dividend or non-profit corporations the best mediums at present, through which the Government can start construction activity.

All transactions of every kind whatsoever will be audited by Haskin and Sells, Certified Public Accounts, in accordance with their letter attached, Exhibit "H".

I. THE APPLICANT

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) <u>Name and address</u> | Techwood, Incorporated, 308 Palmer Building,
Atlanta, Georgia. |
| (b) <u>Official representatives</u> | C. F. Palmer, Temporary Chairman, Board of
Trustees, Techwood, Incorporated, Palmer
Building. |
| (c) <u>Applicant's attorney</u> | Candler & Cox, Judge John S. Candler, Counsel,
409 Palmer Building, Atlanta, Georgia. |
| (d) <u>Architect</u> | Burge & Stevens, 101 Marietta Street, Atlanta,
Georgia. |
| <u>Consulting Engineer</u> | Flagler Company, Red Rock Building, Atlanta,
Georgia. |
| (e) <u>Trustees</u> | Honorable James L. Key, Mayor City of Atlanta,
M. L. Brittain, President of Georgia Institute
of Technology, Atlanta, |

Honorable Clark Howell, Sr., Publisher The
Atlanta Constitution,
Herbert E. Choate, President Atlanta Chamber
of Commerce,
Herbert Porter, General Manager Atlanta,
Georgia, Former U. S. Senator John S. Cohen,
Publisher Atlanta Journal,
John S. Candler, II, Palmer Building, Atlanta,
Georgia,
F. D. Burge, 101 Marietta Street, Atlanta,
Georgia,
T. T. Flagler, Red Rock Building, Atlanta,
Georgia,
C. F. Palmer, Palmer Building, Atlanta, Georgia.

This group will choose five additional trustees, one from labor, one from the tenants in the project, one representing Emory University, and two others, one of which may be a Government representative if so desired by the Federal authorities. (See Exhibit "C".)

II. CONSTRUCTION PERIOD

- (a) Estimated time that will elapse after funds are allocated before
 - (1) Work can be commenced - 60 days
 - (2) Project will be completed - 12 months (can be done in 8 months at slight additional cost).
- (b) Estimate of average number of men to be employed 30 hours per week directly on the project

787 men, 12 months basis or approximately 1300 men, 8 months basis.

III. CHARACTER OF PROJECT

(a) Site

- (1) A map, showing the location and area - attached marked Exhibits "A" and "B".
- (2) Assessed valuation - \$295,725 which is approximately 60% of fair value.
- (3) Tax rate - total \$2.65.
- (4) Any unusual conditions adversely affecting the cost of the project - no unusual conditions adversely affecting cost of project.
- (5) Description of present improvements, existing utilities, etc. - practically all in, or will be furnished by City.
- (6) Approximate number of present owners and proposed method of acquisition of site - there are approximately 138 present owners and the site is being acquired by purchase through options.
- (7) Brief statement of advantages and disadvantages of the site - the site is ideally located in every particular. It is within walking distance of the business district and lies well topographically. See letters attached marked Exhibit "C" from citizens of Atlanta, the Mayor, the City Planning Commission and others.
- (8) Relation to planned growth of the city - is the most logical step in the planned growth of the city, already has school facilities and the project includes two parks within its area covering two entire city blocks with children's playgrounds, etc. Within walking distance of employment and shopping centers with adequate

transportation also.

(b) Proposed Improvements

- (1) Character and type of building - buildings will be fireproof and two to three stories high.
- (2) Number of apartments or houses - 557 apartments of three to five rooms each plus 160 students rooms. There are 9,500 apartment units in Atlanta now. This project will increase the supply less than 6 per cent.
- (3) Estimated number of persons to be housed - it will house 2,026 people.
- (4) Ground coverage - the buildings cover 25% of the ground area exclusive of the two square blocks for parks (ground coverage 264,000 square feet - parks 228,000 square feet - land area exclusive of parks 1,054,000 square feet).
- (5) Number and size of stores - there are eight stores each 27 ft by 70 ft.
- (6) Sufficient specifications and architectural drawings to illustrate the type and character of the buildings - attached marked Exhibit "B".

IV. MANAGEMENT

The operating and management organization is entirely in the hands of a board of fifteen trustees and is not for profit. The management organization itself will have a general manager with offices in the buildings. Management, renting, etc., estimated at approximately 2% of gross income.

V. SUMMARIZED COST AND INCOME STATEMENT

(a) Cost

(1) The land cost is 39 cents per square foot, total	\$ 500,000.00
(2) Utilities, landscaping and grading, etc.	74,000.00
(3) Buildings cost per cubic foot, 26.4 cents, total	1,907,090.00
(4) Architects' Engineers' fees - 4% on 2 and 3	79,344.00
Contractor's fee - 5% on 2 and 3	99,054.00
(5) First mortgage, interest during construction	47,500.00
(6) Other costs:	
Discount 2% on \$375,000 equity	7,500.00
Interest on equity - Debenture bonds during construction	11,250.00
Legal fees, title examination, surveys, etc.	12,262.00
Taxes	12,000.00
	<hr/>
	45,012.00
(7) Total	\$ 2,750,000.00
(8) Estimated cost of labor and materials	
Cost of labor	\$ 762,836
Cost of material	1,144,154

(b) Financing

(1) Amount of mortgage loan	\$ 2,375,000
(2) Equity interest	<hr/> 375,000
(3) Total	\$ 2,750,000

(c) Annual Income

(1) Number of rooms and rate

1,965 rooms at \$7.50 \$ 176,850.00

Students' Dormitory

160 rooms 10 months at \$24.00 \$ 38,400

Summer school two months 25%

occupied 1,920

Tea room 1,800

Total dormitory income 42,120.00

(2) Total annual rental \$ 218,970.00

(3) Linear feet of stores, rental rate,
and total annual rental - 224 linear feet
8 stores @ \$125 per month 12,000.00

(4) All other annual income - 394 garages @
\$2.00, \$9,456, rental of parks by city,
\$15,000 24,456.00

(5) Total gross income \$ 255,426.00

(6) Deduction of allowance for vacancies -
10% on all but \$15,000 for parks 24,042.00

Net \$ 231,384.00

(d) Annual Expense

(1) Operating expense, number of rooms, rate per room per annum -

Heat and water \$ 18,000

Light 3,000

Janitors and maids 7,500

Management 4,900

Decorating and upkeep 15,000

\$ 48,400.00

2,125 rooms operating cost, per room per annum approximately \$23.00 (N.B. Heating cost in Atlanta is approximately one-third New York cost. Cleaners wages in Atlanta are \$8.00 per week compared with \$15.00 to \$18.00 in New York. The cost of \$23.00 per room in Atlanta would be approximately \$39.00 in New York.) Service in dormitory includes heat, cleaning, light, and water. Lawns and shrubs to be maintained by the city as are the parks.

(2) Taxes 12,000.00

(3) Insurance 5,000.00

(4) Total cost of operation \$ 65,400.00

(5) Balance available for interest and amortization \$ 165,984.00

(6) Interest on mortgage loan \$ 95,000.00

(7) Amortization at 1.51% 35,862.00

(8) Total interest and amortization 130,862.00

(9) Balance available for dividends

and reserves 35,022.00

6% on equity 22,500.00

Balance for reserve \$ 12,522.00

VI. PLANNING AND RELATED DATA

- (a) Statement as to whether or not project is part of a larger plan or long-range program of development and, if so, give brief description of other parts of plan or program.

That the project fits in with the long-range development of city, see Exhibit "A" and Exhibit "B" attached which include approval from engineer of Planning Commission.

- (b) Statement as to whether or not there is a city regional planning board and/or housing board, whether this project has been submitted to such board, and the views of such board, if any, in regard to it.

The proposal was not submitted to the entire Planning Board because of need to keep it confidential at present, but the officials individually have approved it.

- (c) State whether the community is part of a metropolitan district and, if so, whether the project is coordinated with the plans for metropolitan development.

The plan is coordinated with the metropolitan development.

- (d) State whether the project has been approved by governmental or civic bodies and, if so, by whom. Give any other evidence of local sentiment favoring the project.

The project has been approved by the Mayor, Chamber of Commerce, the Chairman of the Finance Committee of Council, the Chairman of the Parks Committee of Council, the Engineer of the Planning Commission of the City and various others, all as shown in the attached exhibits. (See Exhibit "C".)

Respectfully submitted,

TECHWOOD, INCORPORATED

BY (signed)
C. F. Palmer, Temporary Chairman
Board of Trustees.

BURGE & STEVENS, ARCHITECTS,

BY: (signed)

FLAGLER COMPANY, CONTRACTOR AND
ENGINEERS,

BY: (signed)

APPENDIX B

TELEGRAMS TO FEDERAL OFFICIALS FROM MAYOR KEY, CLARK HOWELL, AND OTHERS

DECEMBER 28, 1933

HONORABLE MISS FRANCES PERKINS, SEC. OF LABOR AND
HONORABLE TURNER BATTLE, ASSISTANT SEC. OF LABOR
WASHINGTON, D. C.

UNEMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS SO ACCUTE IN ATLANTA WE FEEL IT IMPERATIVE THAT
THE TECHWOOD AND UNIVERSITY HOUSING PROJECTS BE STARTED AT EARLIEST
POSSIBLE MOMENT STOP THEY WILL EMPLOY EIGHTEEN HUNDRED TO TWO THOUSAND
MEN STOP BOTH HAVE BEEN APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENT AND ALL DETAILS ARE
COMPLETED LOCALLY SO WE CAN NOT UNDERSTAND ANY POSSIBLE REASON FOR FURTHER
DELAY STOP PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT THIS WEEK THAT WORK WILL ACTUALLY START
IN JANUARY WILL HELP US KEEP THE LABOR SITUATION IN HAND STOP WE URGE
YOUR COOPERATION.

JAMES L. KEY, MAYOR

JOHN S. COHEN, PUBLISHER JOURNAL

CLARK HOWELL, PUBLISHER CONSTITUTION

HERBERT PORTER, PUBLISHER GEORGIA.

DECEMBER 28, 1933

HON. ROBT. D. KOHN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING
FIFTH FLOOR DEPT OF INTERIOR BLDG.
WASHINGTON, D. C.

YOUR LETTER 23 I CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW ANY INVESTIGATION REGARDING TECH-
WOOD AT THIS LATE DATE CAN BRING OUT ANYTHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN CAREFULLY
ANALYZED AND CONSIDERED BY OUR BOARD BEFORE WE APPROVED PROJECT FOR SUB-
MISSION TO YOU. WE WHO HAVE SPENT OUR LIVES IN ATLANTA SHOULD KNOW SOME-
THING OF ITS NEEDS AND HAVE GIVEN CAREFUL CONSIDERATION TO SOURCE OF
TENANTS FOR PROJECT SUCH AS HUNDREDS OF RAILROAD CLERKS STOP MR. PEGRAM
VICE PRESIDENT OF SOUTHERN IS ONLY ONE OF SCORES OF SIMILAR EXECUTIVES WE
HAVE CONSULTED STOP I HAVE HEARD MANY REPORTS OF THE INVESTIGATION MADE
HERE IN YOUR NAME AND IF YOUR REPRESENTATIVE TALKED WITH ANY PEOPLE OTHER
THAN THOSE WHO ARE PREJUDICED I FAILED TO HEAR IT STOP MONTHS REQUIRED TO
THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATE A PROJECT AS WE HAVE FOUND AND TO DUPLICATE THIS
WORK WE FEEL UNNECESSARY AND WILL DEFEAT PRIMARY PURPOSE OF FURNISHING
EMPLOYMENT DURING PRESENT CRISIS STOP SINCERELY TRUST YOU WILL SEND PRO-
JECT MANAGER IMMEDIATELY WITH AUTHORITY TO GET THE WORK STARTED WITHOUT
FURTHER DELAY OR ELSE THAT YOU WILL BE FRANK ENOUGH TO TELL US YOU DONT
WANT US OR OUR PROJECT STOP FULLY UNDERSTAND DIFFICULTIES CONFRONTING YOU
BUT FEEL VERY STRONGLY TIME HAS NOW COME TO ACT AND I RELY ON YOU TO
HELP US IN OUR EMERGENCY.

CLARK HOWELL SR.

APPENDIX C

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SECOND RULING BY COMPTROLLER GENERAL MCCARL BY
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING OFFICIALS

BULLETIN 78, FEBRUARY 1, 1936

TO ALL MEMBERS OF THE ASSOCIATION:

A few weeks ago we recounted in Bulletin No. 75 some of the troubles that have beset the Housing Division of PWA in carrying out its program of housing for families of low income. Apparently the Division's luck has not changed. A few days ago Administrator Ickes of PWA received a ruling from Comptroller General McCarl holding that rents on housing projects built with funds appropriated by the National Industrial Recovery Act (approved June 16, 1933) must be high enough to return the entire capital cost of the projects with interest equal at least to the rate the United States has to pay on its bonded indebtedness. In other words, under existing legislation, housing projects financed with these funds cannot be subsidized by the Federal government.

The Issue

Last fall Mr. Ickes asked the Comptroller General's opinion on the rental policy proposed for the Techwood Project in Atlanta, Georgia, the project nearest ready for occupancy. In his letter he pointed out that:

"The purpose of the Act authorizing the construction of
this Project was to eliminate slums and to provide suitable

housing for persons of low income. The first purpose has been effectually accomplished by the removal of the old buildings and the second purpose can be accomplished only by setting a rental figure which we believe will be within the means of persons of low income."

Mr. Ickes further referred to schedules of cost and estimated operating expenses for Techwood submitted with his letter which showed that the proposed capital grant would make possible a reduction in rental of approximately three dollars per room per month. He stated that in his opinion this reduction brought the rental of the new project within the reach of "persons in the low income bracket." He then summarized his inquiry in the following words:

"The National Industrial Recovery Act authorized the renting or leasing of the premises, but sets no limitation upon the amount to be charged for rent, and I feel, particularly in view of the purposes of that Act, that I may establish the rent at such figure as I determine shall best accomplish those purposes. Before doing so, however, I desire your opinion as to whether or not there is any limitation which would prohibit me from fixing the rent for this or any other housing project at such figure as would best accomplish the purpose of low-cost housing, or whether I am compelled by law to establish such figure as will amortize the moneys invested."

The Opinion

In his reply, Mr. McCarl stated:

"It seems to have been the primary purpose of the National

Industrial Recovery Act to create employment and revive industry, and as one means to such end there was authorized a comprehensive program of public works including projects of slum-clearance and low-cost housing. While thus recognized as projects that would likely provide extensive employments and utilization of the products of industry,--and by their selection for inclusion in the program their desirability was also recognized--there has been found nothing in the enactment or in any law subsequently enacted indicating an intent that administration of completed projects--for instance, that sales should be planned at prices below actual costs to the government"

He further reasoned that without definite Congressional authorization for the reduced rental the principle stated in Pacific Hardware Co. v. United States, 49 Ct. Cls. 327,335, on claims due the government applied here. He cited from this opinion the following sentences:

"It is unquestionably true that an official of the Government is not authorized to give away or remit a claim due the Government. This rule is grounded in a sound public policy and is not to be weakened."

The application of this principle was made clear by the statement:

"The fixing of rental rates which would not bring in a net return on the money invested in the property equal, at least, to the rate the United States is required to pay on its bonded indebtedness would apparently be giving away the property of the United States"

Finally, the Comptroller General's opinion was summarized in this sentence:

"It necessarily follows that the response to your question must be that in the present state of the law there exists no authority for the fixing of rentals at such low rates as will violate the principle stated in Pacific Hardware Co. v. United States, supra."

Secretary Ickes' Comment

In commenting upon this opinion, Mr. Ickes' said:

"I have long been of the opinion that additional legislation is required if we are successfully to administer this program which was authorized by Congress. To establish this fact definitely, I asked the Comptroller General for an opinion on the right of the Government to rent, on the basis of a 45 per cent grant, its slum clearance projects at levels within the reach of the lower income groups, now housed under disgraceful conditions.

"His opinion holding that there is nothing in the present law which contemplates the allowance of a 45 per cent capital grant, as on other PWA projects, is clear testimony that if this program is to be administered successfully for the benefit of those for whom it was intended, there must be additional legislation.

"It is perfectly obvious that if the low-income group, now living under the most wretched conditions imaginable in American slums, are to be given decent shelter and the opportunity to grow up as useful citizens, there must be a subsidy applied to their housing. The Public Works Administration, without subsidy, is able to build housing which can be made available to persons of limited incomes but not the lower groups which we are seeking to

house. It is the lower group which must be taken care of."

He stated further that amendatory legislation would be sought from the Present Congress.

Some Remarks and Second-Guessing

Among the various other comments that could be made on this ruling perhaps the following are worth recording:

1. Fortunately, the opinion of the Comptroller General applied only to ten projects: Techwood and University in Atlanta; Riverside Heights and William B. Patterson Courts in Montgomery, Alabama; Cedar Central in Cleveland; Community Housing in Indianapolis; the addition to the Jane Addams project in Chicago; Brewster project in Detroit; and the projects in Evansville, Indiana and Schenectady, New York. It does not apply to the Division's other projects financed out of funds appropriated by the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935. (Approved April 8, 1935.)

2. Like some other legislation drafted in the feverish days of the spring of 1933, when most of the drafters as well as many other people believed that they were racing with time to prevent a complete economic collapse of the country, the Act in question is none too specific on some points. This question of rents is one of them. Section 202 authorizes the Administrator of PWA, under the direction of the President, to prepare a comprehensive program of public works, including... ." (d) construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum-clearance projects;"

Section 203 (a) authorizes the President, through the Administrator, or through such other agencies as he may designate or create, (1) to construct, finance, or aid in the construction or financing of any public

works project included in the program prepared pursuant to Section 202; Section 203 (a) - (2) definitely authorizes grants "to States, municipalities, or other public bodies" undertaking projects included in the President's comprehensive program.

It will be recalled that the Comptroller General prevented the operation of the Public Works Emergency Housing Corporation, which was chartered as an agency to handle the direct Federal program of housing construction. It is useless, but rather interesting, to speculate on whether this Housing Corporation, if it had been allowed to function, would have been held to be a public body to which grants were definitely authorized.

3. Although this may not have been an important element in his final decision, the Comptroller General in answering Mr. Ickes' contention that the lower rents were necessary to bring the housing within the reach of families of low income, fell naively into one of the most common misinterpretations of the phrase "low-cost housing." Strangely enough for one whose opinions are usually marked by most careful exploration of the meanings of such phrases, Mr. McCarl assumed without any signs of doubt that "low-cost housing" could only mean housing produced at low construction costs. It seems not to have occurred to him that the phrase might mean, (as, of course, it has meant in housing discussions for some years at least,) low cost to the occupants of the housing. If this second meaning were adopted, it would follow without much question that under present conditions low production costs are only one, and as yet a totally inadequate means of providing low-cost housing. From this position it would have been easy to conclude that such subsidies as Mr. Ickes wished

to make were necessary to carry out the housing purposes of the Act.

This interpretation, however, was not adopted and possibly it is expecting too much to ask that the phrase, "low-cost housing," should be considered what the lawyers call a "word of art;" i.e., a phrase with a definitely accepted technical usage. At any rate, no one will deny that future legislation for housing must be more specific both in defining terms and in authorizing any forms of governmental subsidy or other assistance that is to be used.

NAHO will inform you of the new bills for amendatory legislation which have been promised by Secretary Ickes.

Faithfully yours,

Coleman Woodbury

Director

APPENDIX D

A DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF FACILITIES, TENANCY, AND RENTALS, BY P.W.A.

P.W. 57829

FEDERAL EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION
OF PUBLIC WORKS

PWA PRESS SECTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 1943

Techwood Homes, Atlanta, first PWA slum clearance project to be completed, will rent for an average of \$5.58 per room per month, PWA Administrator Harold L. Ickes announced today.

This figure covers base dwellings rent, to which \$1.81 per room per month will be added to cover the cost of heat, hot and cold water and electricity for lighting, cooking and refrigeration, Administrator Ickes states. The final average charge of \$7.39 cover complete dwelling operation costs and will be all the tenant will have to pay to operate his home. Stoves and refrigerators are provided as part of the project.

Rentals will vary according to the location of the dwelling units in the buildings of the project. The rental schedule follows:

Unit	Rents	Heat, Lights, Hot Water, Power for Cooking, and Refrigeration	Total Average Cost of Shelter, Heat, Lights, Hot Water, Power for Cooking, and Refrigeration
3 room apartments	\$16.40 - \$18.65	\$ 5.95	\$23.47
4 room apartments	\$20.60 - \$22.70	\$ 6.70	\$28.00
5 room apartments	\$24.35 - \$25.40	\$ 7.50	\$32.68
5 room houses	\$26.05 - \$29.35	\$ 7.80	\$34.93
6 room houses	\$27.85 - \$31.30	\$ 8.35	\$38.10

For these rentals, tenants will receive modern, sanitary, fireproof homes, carefully laid out in an integrated community plan where buildings cover only 25 per cent of the area. This is in contrast to unsanitary and overcrowded slum conditions from which tenants will be drawn.

According to surveys conducted in Atlanta, at least 4,300 self-sustaining, low-income families in the city pay an average of \$19.50 per month for substandard houses. Expenditures for heating, lighting, etc., cooking fuel and water averaged \$8.25 monthly, giving a total of \$27.75 for dwelling expenses. This figure covered only ice in the summertime and minimum heating. In their new homes, tenants will have year-round refrigeration, constant heating during the heating season, continuous hot water, completely modern home equipment, and healthful, well-designed homes in which to live. For this, the overall average rent will be \$27.77.

All buildings of the new project are of fireproof construction, planned so that every apartment has a good exposure; and all have cross-

ventilation. Open space around all buildings is landscaped with grass, trees, and shrubbery.

Every effort has been made in the use of materials to facilitate sanitation and cleanliness. The stair halls are lined with glazed tile. The floors of the living room, bedrooms, and dining room have asphalt tile floors and the kitchen floors are covered with linoleum. Steel casement windows are used throughout, affording the maximum ventilation. Screens are provided for all windows. Vermin-proof metal trim is used throughout all rooms. All apartments are served by incinerators, eliminating unsanitary methods of garbage disposal.

Ranging in price from \$16.40 to \$18.65, the three-room apartment units include living room, bedroom, bath, and full-sized kitchen with modern combination sink and wash tub, electric stove, and electric refrigeration. Bathroom equipment includes toilet, lavatory, and five-foot tub. The four-room apartments ranging in base rent from \$20.60 to \$22.70 and the five-room apartments ranging in price from \$24.35 to \$25.40 are similar with the addition of one and two bedrooms.

Five-room group houses renting from \$26.05 to \$29.36 include living room, dining room, two bedrooms, bath, and kitchen. Six-room group houses renting from \$27.85 to \$31.30 are similar with the addition of a third bedroom.

These rental rates apply only to the Techwood project, Administrator Ickes pointed out. Rents will not be standard throughout the fifty projects of the Housing Division, but will be determined by the individual cost of each project, the latter depending upon type of accommodations offered, geographical location, cost of land, and similar factors.

.....

Only tenants selected through careful investigation will be admitted to the 604 units of Techwood Homes. They will be chosen from low income groups. Sizes of families will be such that overcrowding will be avoided.

Selection of tenants for the Techwood Homes project will be started as soon as possible, Administrator Ickes said. Because of the careful nature of the investigation required, no opening date for the project has been set. At the present time, over 2,000 registrations have been made for 604 living units.

The Techwood project replaces a slum community covering 11 blocks in Atlanta, long noted for the high rates of crime and disease. Construction of the new buildings removed one of the worst fire hazards threatening the city, according to J. O. Parker, Chief of the Atlanta Fire Department, who asserted that the ramshackle shacks formerly on the area were capable of starting a conflagration equal to the worst fire in Atlanta's history, which occurred in 1917.

The development is the first of PWA's fifty slum clearance and low-rent housing projects in thirty-five cities to reach completion, and was the first to be put under construction. A second Atlanta project, University, will be completed this fall.

Application notices will be mailed shortly to all who have registered, Administrator Ickes said. Applicants will be graded according to their housing needs and economic conditions, preference being given to those self-sustaining families of lowest income now residing under substandard conditions.

APPENDIX E

FEDERAL EMERGENCY ADMINISTRATION OF PUBLIC WORKS

PWA PRESS SECTION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 1944

Public Works Administrator Harold L. Ickes today made public regulations governing the selection of tenants in the new Techwood Homes slum clearance project in Atlanta, Georgia.

The regulations were worked out by the Housing Division of PWA in cooperation with the Citizens' Advisory Committee on Housing for the project.

Administrator Ickes stated that already some 2,000 registrations for the available 604 dwelling units have been received. As applications continue to come in, each will be painstakingly checked by the local housing manager and the Atlanta Advisory Committee on Housing, before final selection is determined.

Families to be eligible for the project must come from sub-standard housing conditions. In addition, no families will be considered whose incomes exceed five times the rent of the dwelling they propose to occupy. Both regulations are mandatory under the terms of the George-Healey Bill passed by Congress.

"It has been our stated policy from the beginning to make dwellings in these projects available only to families of low income forced to reside

under sub-standard or slum housing conditions," Administrator Ickes said. "In that policy, the Congress has concurred."

"PWA's slum clearance projects are all designed to offer better living opportunities to those who, for economic reasons, have been denied decent housing conditions. They will be operated strictly on this basis.

"Study will be made of persons applying for quarters in these projects. Specific standards for selection of tenants have been established by the Housing Division, in cooperation with the local advisory committee, but a fundamental requirement will be that tenants in the new developments must come from a bad housing environment. PWA will not consider families who, at the present time, are able to maintain themselves under tolerable living conditions.

"This has been PWA's policy all along. It is now the law."

Keeping the tenancy within the scope of the low income group for which the project was designed, one of the first requirements will be that prospective tenants for the Techwood project will have an income of not lower than \$700 and not more than \$1,800, varying with the size of the family.

Because of the vastness of the project and the economy of mass purchasing, it is possible for the Housing Division to rent dwelling space in the project at low figures. Rentals in the building range from \$16.40 monthly for three-room apartments to \$31.30 for the highest price six-room group house. Utility services such as heating from a central plant, water and electricity for lighting, cooking and refrigeration will be supplied at cost.

As a further requirement, the PWA Housing Division will take every

precaution to prevent overcrowding, permitting a maximum of three persons in a three-room apartment; five persons in a four-room apartment, and seven persons in a five-room apartment. Seven persons will be permitted in a six-room group house. Children under two years of age are not counted as individuals in determining the sizes of families which will be admitted.

All families, however, will consist only of relatives, including dependents clearly established as part of the family group. Lodgers or groups of unrelated adults will not be eligible.

Preference will be given to self-sustaining, low-income families with children, and those families whose head is a citizen of the United States or who has taken out first papers.

To avoid establishing a transient class of tenancy in the Atlanta project, it will be necessary to have been a resident of the city for at least a year before applying for a dwelling in the new project.

In order to insure fairness to all applicants, applications of those who have already registered will be reviewed chronologically after their eligibility has been ascertained. Others who have not previously registered may make applications which will be received for later consideration.

Techwood Homes embodies the social and health standards which the Public Works Administration has set in its fifty housing projects already under construction in this country and in two of its insular possessions. The dwellings are of three-story apartments and two-story group houses arranged attractively about landscaped areas. All are sidely spaced, assuring privacy, ample air, and sunlight. Included in the site are two parks, with smaller play areas for small children scattered through the

project grounds.

Each living unit will be completely equipped with a modern bathroom and kitchen having an electric stove and refrigerator.

APPENDIX F

DETAILED PROVISIONS OF THE U. S. HOUSING ACT OF 1937 COMPILED BY THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF HOUSING OFFICIALS

Annual Contributions: Annual grants authorized to supplement rents collected by local authorities. These contributions to be limited by Authority to amount and period necessary to assure low-rent character of development. Under no circumstances may annual contribution exceed yield at federal going rate plus 1% upon development or acquisition cost.

Term of annual contributions may not exceed sixty years. If greater than twenty years, the Authority shall reserve the right to re-examine and if necessary, to readjust amounts at the end of ten years and every five years thereafter. Subject to this provision annual contributions must be in fixed and uniform amounts.

Authority's power to enter into contracts for annual contributions limited to \$20,000,000 over a period of substantially three years.

Capital Grants: Upon request of a local housing agency approved by the United States Authority, a rather involved system of capital grants may be substituted for annual contributions to assure low rents. The Authority's capital grant may not exceed 25% of the project costs. In addition, the President may allocate to the Authority from unemployment relief funds an additional grant to be expended for labor on the development. This additional grant may not exceed 15% of cost. No federal capital grant may be made unless the state or local governments make a

grant of 20%. This local grant may be in the form of cash, land, or the capitalized value of community facilities, tax remissions, or tax exemptions.

Federal capital grants are limited to \$30,000,000 during a period of substantially three years.

Local Annual Contributions: The Authority may make no annual contributions to supplement rents unless the state or local governments shall contribute "in the form of cash or tax remissions, general or special, or tax exemptions, at least 20 per centum of the annual contributions herein provided."

Existing Projects: The President may transfer to the Authority any right or title held by an agency of the federal government in any housing or slum clearance project. He may also transfer any of the assets, records, libraries, materials, and any unexpended balances of funds allocated to such agencies for housing or slum clearance activities, or any employees engaged in such work. Subject to the provisions of this act, the Authority may continue any or all activities undertaken in connection with projects so transferred.

Projects transferred or acquired by the Authority shall be sold or leased "as soon as practicable." Sale may be only to state or local housing authorities. After sale a project shall be eligible for loans, grants, or annual contributions. Sale price shall be not less than a fair value of the project for low-rent housing purposes less depreciation.

Low Rents: The Authority has broad powers to assure the low-rent character of projects financed by it. These include the right, upon substantial breach of agreement to maintain low rents, to raise the interest

rate on loans, or to declare the unpaid principal due at once, or to terminate annual contributions.

Furthermore, the Authority is under a triple limitation on construction costs: (a) Projects may "not be of elaborate or expensive design or materials;" (b) The average construction cost per dwelling unit in any project may not exceed the average cost of units privately produced in the same locality under building laws applicable to the housing project and under similar labor standards; (c) In addition, in cities under 500,000 construction cost may not exceed \$4,000 per dwelling unit or \$1,000 per room. In larger cities the figures are \$5,000 per family unit and \$1,250 per room. These cost figures exclude land, demolition costs, and non-dwelling facilities, which are site development, improvements, and facilities located outside building walls, e.g., sidewalks, utilities, roads, etc.

Slum Clearance: Projects subsidized by the Authority must include the demolition and effective closing or the compulsory repair and improvement of unsafe and unsanitary dwellings substantially equal in number to the units to be constructed. The Authority, however, may defer this elimination of unfit buildings under conditions of shortage "so acute as to force dangerous overcrowding of such families."

Labor Standards: Labor employed on projects assisted by the Authority is assured prevailing wages and standard working conditions¹¹⁸.

APPENDIX G

A CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TECHWOOD HOMES

March, 1933	The Federal Administration of Public Works was created in the National Industrial Recovery Act.
Spring, 1933	Charles F. Palmer began to notice the slum conditions in the Techwood area.
Summer, 1933	Mr. Palmer, Clark Howell, and others formed a Board of Trustees and submitted an application to the Federal Administration of Public Works.
October 13, 1933	P.W.A. approved the Techwood application.
October 16, 1933	The Apartment Owners Association of Atlanta voiced opposition to the project.
November, 1933	A change of policy caused Techwood to be transferred to the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation.
November, 1933	The Board of Trustees appealed to Washington to get started because of acute unemployment in Atlanta.
December 28, 1933	Clark Howell urged Dr. Kohn, Head of the Housing Division of P.W.A. to get started.
March, 1934	The transfer of Techwood to the Federal Emergency Housing Corporation was completed.
April, 1934	Mayor Key urged Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to appoint the architects and begin site acquisition.

May 17, 1934	Burge and Stevens, Atlanta architects, were officially selected.
July, 1934	The injunction by the Atlanta Apartment Owners Association was dismissed.
July, 1934	Mr. Palmer and the Board of Trustees were besieged by visitors from other cities who wanted to get a similar program started.
July 7, 1934	Charles Palmer and his wife went to Western Europe to study public housing techniques (second trip).
September, 1934	Mr. Palmer prepared a film to urge a national program of public housing and slum clearance.
September 29, 1934	Secretary Ickes came to Atlanta for a ceremony to begin construction.
October, 1934 to November, 1935	Techwood was under construction.
November 29, 1935	President Roosevelt dedicated Techwood.
1935 and 1936	Mr. Palmer and others assisted in the preparation of 1936 Housing Act which did not pass.
January, 1936	Occupancy was started.
January, 1936	Comptroller General McCarl ruled that rents must be high enough to repay loan.
March 27, 1936	A corrective bill was passed by the Congress to remedy rent problem and a payment system in lieu of taxes.
May, 1936	Rental of units was started again.
February, 1937	The Housing Act of 1937 was initially prepared.

September 1, 1937	The first major legislation was passed to begin a national program of housing and slum redevelopment.
May, 1938	After much delay, the Atlanta Housing Authority was established with Charles Palmer as its first chairman.
July, 1947	Housing and Home Finance Agency succeeded the U. S. Housing Authority.
1949	The Housing Act of 1949 established slum clearance as a national policy.
1965	Housing and slum clearance became a part of the new cabinet level agency, the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

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